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New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 52 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387 and A/57/387/Corr.1)

Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique): The delegation of the Republic of Mozambique feels honoured to be part of this Assembly, in which United Nations Member States are debating an agenda for further change, with a view to strengthening the United Nations system. We thank the Secretary-General for introducing his report (A/57/387 and Corr.1). My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, by South Africa on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union, and by Egypt on behalf of the African Group.

My delegation has carefully reviewed the report of the Secretary-General and considers it a very useful tool in the current efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system. The report contains good proposals that deserve our full attention. We welcome those proposals for further pursuing the agenda for change and pledge our full support to the Secretary-General in this daunting task, which requires the collective wisdom and responsibility of the United Nations family.

As stated by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, the far-reaching proposals advanced in the report of the Secretary-General require more time for consideration, including further, detailed clarification of their nature and scope, as well as an extensive debate within the United Nations family. In that regard, we welcome the President's intention to hold consultations on the report. Nevertheless, my delegation would like to share its preliminary views on the report, in the hope that they will contribute to deepening the debate that we have just initiated on this matter.

My delegation has been following closely the reform process under way since 1997. Reform has contributed towards positioning the United Nations system at the forefront of international action to tackle global challenges. The reforms undertaken thus far, mainly targeting the internal structures and culture of the United Nations, have improved coherence, efficiency, openness and creativity within the United Nations system.

Now, we need to address the ultimate goals of the reform: ensuring that the Organization devotes its attention to the priorities agreed upon by Member States and that the Secretariat delivers better service. That requires a wide-ranging reform process that also needs to target the institutional framework of the United Nations system, including, inter alia, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council,

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the Security Council and the programme of work of the Organization.

My delegation believes that aligning the activities of the United Nations system and the priorities defined by Member States should be based on a common policy framework drawn from the Millennium Declaration, the outcome documents of major United Nations conferences and summits — such as those on financing for development, sustainable development, the least developed countries, HIV/AIDS, children, small arms, racism, women, social development and human settlements — and other legislative mandates contained in relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The common policy framework for the entire United Nations system should provide clear benchmarks related to the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as other goals and targets envisaged in the relevant documents used to inform the drafting of the framework. The policy framework should also recognize the special, preferential treatment that Africa and least developed countries should be accorded when we are prioritizing United Nations activities, as agreed upon in various meetings and documents.

The common policy framework to be debated and agreed upon by consensus, as well as the revised programme budget drafted on the basis of that framework, should be forward-looking, action-oriented and results-based. But, ultimately, it should once and for all align activities with agreed priorities, including by allocating the necessary resources for the relevant activities. Resources should be allocated to the areas where they are most needed and where they can make a real difference. We should avoid the current trend of allocating resources based on political agendas alien to the United Nations objectives, which has proved to be cost ineffective and wasteful. The recommendations put forward in the Secretary-General's report attempt to deal with some of those issues.

In this reform process, Africa should indeed be accorded special attention. We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General to enhance the mandate of the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa as a step in the right direction. Although at this stage there is no clarity on the specific mandate, we believe that a focus on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) would be in order, consistent with the recently adopted General Assembly resolution on NEPAD resolution 57/2. We also hope that this arrangement will be of a permanent nature and that the Adviser will report directly to the Secretary-General to ensure the necessary political guidance and impact.

At the same time, it is crucial that the office of the Adviser be adequately staffed and resourced. We further suggest that the Adviser work closely with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as most African countries fall into the category of least developed countries. Mandates could thus be streamlined and cooperation ensured.

Prioritization of activities and resources should also be extended to the United Nations presence at the country level. We believe that the United Nations should focus both on countries emerging from conflicts and on those involved in development activities.

The common policy framework should also be translated into the United Nations country offices through the mainstreaming into national development strategies of the Millennium Development Goals and other goals and targets that will form part of the policy framework. United Nations country offices should be further improved and strengthened to ensure that they play a major role in advocacy, implementation and policy advice to countries in need. Therefore, United Nations country offices should be adequately resourced, especially financially and in terms of staff, in order to fulfil the important tasks at hand. This requires the additional and predictable resources, particularly core resources, that are so critical to development projects in Africa and in least developed countries in general.

We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General to prepare a document clarifying roles and responsibilities in the area of technical cooperation. That would definitely address the current duplication, competition and overlaps that are common at the country level, and would thereby contribute to making savings and to minimizing potential waste of resources.

My delegation supports closer interaction between the United Nations and civil society, as well as partnerships with the private sector. We believe that promoting such partnerships would certainly result in added value to the organization. In this process, we

must ensure that participation by civil society organizations in the affairs of the United Nations is done in a fair and balanced manner, in which civil society organizations of developing countries have a meaningful role to play. In that connection, we support the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

The Republic of Mozambique is broadly supportive of the Secretary-General's proposals to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations and streamline the budgetary and administrative activities of the Organization. We support the Secretary-General's proposal to prepare a revised programme budget for 2004-2005, based on the priorities of the Organization: a common policy framework for the entire United Nations system drawn from the Millennium Declaration, outcome documents of major United Nations conferences and summits, and other legislative mandates adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

We took note of the Secretary-General's proposals on enhancing staff mobility across the United Nations system. In our view, mobility, together with best quality in staffing, should be geared towards ensuring the right staff for the required job. We reaffirm resolution 55/258 as the cornerstone of human resources management at the United Nations. In particular, we reaffirm our principled position on the need to ensure equitable geographical representation and gender balance in the United Nations staff. Therefore, we urge the Secretary-General to fulfil the relevant provisions of resolution 55/258, including presenting a programme with specific targets on the recruitment of nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

The reform process we are engaged in can be successful only if all members of the United Nations family show the necessary political will and shoulder their collective responsibility. As we reach the most critical part of the reform process, the sense of commitment should be stepped up. The Assembly can rest assured of the commitment and cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique in that regard.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): Seeing that I have the privilege of being the forty-seventh speaker on this agenda item, I will endeavour to keep my statement brief. The report before us, "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), is nothing less than extraordinary. It is concise, candid and constructive. It is a work that embodies the spirit of the agenda itself, and it calls for "fewer reports that are richer in content and shorter in length" (para. 27).

I would like to comment on four specific aspects of the Secretary-General's report that are of particular interest to my delegation. First, regarding the work of this very body, the General Assembly, the Secretary-General suggests the combining of duplicative discussions and the reduction of recurring agenda items. My delegation has frequently lamented the automatic annual rehash of resolutions without regard for the relevance of their content or the efficiency of their treatment. A reduction in the number of overlapping resolutions can be achieved by simply merging and editing texts, thus creating important savings in time, money and paperwork. The pattern of recurring agenda items is particularly annoying and wasteful. We support the Secretary-General's call for a rigorous review of this practice and his suggestion that many issues no longer be addressed annually.

Secondly, I note the Secretary-General's call for realigned priorities, including a focus on technology-based development solutions, water issues, the promotion of good governance as the foundation for peace, and the strengthening of the United Nations capacity to fight terrorism. Those goals seem to my delegation to be right on target. From our perspective, those four priorities constitute the building blocks for regional reconciliation and provide a promise of cooperation, development and prosperity for all peace-loving peoples.

Thirdly, in his report, the Secretary-General observes that "The Department of Public Information has suffered from a fragmentation of its efforts as a result of too many mandates and missions" (*para. 60*). Our delegation could not agree more with that statement. The valuable resources of this Organization have been squandered on unnecessary and partial information efforts, perpetuated by partisan political perspectives. The new operating model of the Department proposed by the Secretary-General should resolve that wasteful and counterproductive phenomenon.

Lastly, the Secretary-General calls for the establishment of a panel to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and to

offer practical recommendations for approved modalities of interaction. The effort to bring about improved engagement with civil society based on procedures and policies that reflect greater coherence, consistency and predictability is indeed welcome. The terms and conditions governing the accreditation and participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences should indeed be reviewed and improved in order to, among other things, protect the focus of the Organization from being appropriated by hidden agendas.

In conclusion, we both welcome and endorse the report of the Secretary-General. We stand ready to assist in the efforts to turn that vision into a reality.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the submission of his report, "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1). Mexico welcomes this new effort by the Secretary-General to reform the Organization so that it can face effectively the challenges and the opportunities presented to us by the new millennium. We believe that the report before us today for consideration not only is timely and necessary, but also encompasses spheres that go beyond the field of administration and thus require a renewed commitment by all Member States to multilateralism. This is a matter of strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to act to promote peace and development.

In that context, I should like, first of all, to commit the delegation of Mexico to working together with the Secretary-General and with the President of the General Assembly in the process of building the consensus that this exercise requires. We shall maintain high-level participation in the deliberations and negotiations that are to follow this debate, and we shall always seek to place the general interest above individual considerations.

Five years ago, the United Nations began a process of profound and necessary transformation that has not been completed and that now includes areas unimagined in 1997. We have moved from structural reform of the Secretariat to reviewing the working methods of the Organization and of the intergovernmental organs that constitute it. That requires a set of actions, not only by the Secretary-General but also, and above all, by Member States. It is the duty of all Member States to review the Organization's priorities and to provide the general guidance that enables the United Nations to pursue its principles and purposes in a new international context that is always changing.

We must develop a new strategic vision that incorporates new actors and realities so that our action continues to be relevant and so that we can have a constructive impact on international events. That means abandoning certain obsolete parliamentary practices and reaffirming confidence in the system and in the need for balanced and complementary action among the principal organs of the Organization.

We view the proposals contained in the report as part of a set of actions to be taken not only by the Secretariat but also by the other principal organs of the United Nations in order to make progress in a process of broad and sustained reform. We appreciate the frankness and the clarity with which the report of the Secretary-General presents the current situation with regard to certain aspects of the Organization. That focus helps us to identify strengths and weaknesses.

It is clear that the full implementation of the measures proposed by the Secretary-General will require broad consultation and the political will of Member States. There are various possibilities to put forth in our discussions. Accordingly, we support the proposal to create a high-level open-ended group that would work informally. We must ensure that the process is given genuine impetus from the highest level of our delegations. In any case, we must quickly clarify the nature of the process and the timetable for our future discussions. We must not miss the opportunity to adopt the necessary relevant decisions, and to adopt them now.

There are certain specific aspects on which we should like to comment. With regard to the budget, we believe that the Organization has made important progress with respect to planning, transparency, accountability and financial discipline. In addition, we note with satisfaction a greater rationalization of the work of the Organization and a better use of the available resources.

Mexico agrees with the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in action 1 of his report, that the priorities of the Millennium Declaration should be better reflected in the programme budget. However, my delegation is concerned about the possibility that in

that exercise, certain priorities, such as disarmament and drug control, might be put aside even though they are fully reflected in the medium-term plan. Therefore, my delegation is interested in knowing how that proposal will be implemented, since the delicate balance of priorities established in the medium-term plan must not be altered.

My delegation also believes that we must discuss in depth action 21 (d), which would give the Secretary-General a certain level of budgetary discretion. The two criteria that, in our opinion, should guide the discussions on this subject are confidence in the Secretariat and, secondly, the need for oversight mechanisms that clearly specify frames of reference within which the Secretary-General can make use of such capacities.

Mexico accords high priority to the subject of human rights and generally agrees with the report's proposals in that regard. We believe that strengthening the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is very important. My delegation awaits with great interest the report and the plans to be formulated in order to implement actions 2 to 5 of the Secretary-General's report.

Lastly, my delegation believes that human resources are the most valuable asset of countries and institutions. We understand the concern of the Secretary-General that the United Nations should be an attractive option for those who work here. We are aware that instituting modern working methods will require greater flexibility. We believe, however, that the new culture of work proposed by the Secretary-General should include accountability as one of its central priorities.

We reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable proposals. They are clearly directed towards ensuring that our Organization is more effective and that it has a clearer approach with respect to priorities. My delegation will work with the President of the General Assembly and with the Secretary-General to attain those objectives.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: We welcome the fact that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has begun his second term of office by submitting proposals aimed at ensuring that the United Nations focuses its efforts on implementing the priorities set out at a number of conferences. My country has already expressed its views regarding the changes and reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in document A/57/387. Before making several further comments, I should like to stress that my country fully supports the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the statement by the representative of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the African Union, and the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the African Group.

The Charter sets out all the purposes and principles of the United Nations and its principal organs. Those organs have done a great deal of work and achieved much over the years, and the Millennium Declaration represents a further step forward in this respect despite many unexpected challenges. However, we want to ensure that the United Nations is even stronger than in the past, so it is essential and urgent that we make its bodies more effective. The Secretary-General should be commended for having taken this new initiative in response to the wishes expressed two years ago by our heads of State or Government, who made clear their resolve to make our Organization more effective in attaining its declared goals.

We note that there is a need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly; that is the task that we have set ourselves. This year, Member States elected the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the chairpersons of the Main Committees three months before the beginning of the regular session. That represents important progress, but we believe that further changes need to be made. A number of United Nations resolutions remain dead letters, which is no longer acceptable. We must endeavour to distinguish between successes and failures and how to deal with the causes of such failures. We must be candid lest we create the impression that the General Assembly is merely a forum in which people lament certain situations or praise certain things, but where nobody really listens.

The Secretary-General was right to call upon the General Assembly to streamline its agenda. We support the idea that a number of items should be studied on a biennial basis. We would also like to endorse the practice employed at this session of clustering certain items and considering them jointly. We do not, however, believe that other items that have been on the agenda for years should be eliminated. We believe that it really depends on the decisions taken under those

items: if they have not been implemented, they can be deleted.

The Secretary-General has said that United Nations reform must be accompanied by reform of the Security Council. This is a very important issue. We must demonstrate the necessary political will to resolve the stalemate in that area in order to facilitate the reform of the Security Council so that it can become truly representative of all States.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General's statement that Security Council reform cannot be confined to an increase in the membership but that there must also be an improvement in the Council's working methods. We have made some progress in that area, but not enough. We must improve its working methods and address the shortcomings in that respect. The most recent changes in the Council's work must be institutionalized.

The Secretary-General states that the Security Council must turn to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to help it address issues and problems. Member States should also make an effort to promote the work of the Security Council and increase its contacts with other bodies, such as the International Court of Justice, as well as with regional organizations and arrangements. It must be more transparent in its work, more neutral and more objective. It should not operate according to a policy of double standards. We need to make good on these shortcomings, which have a very unfortunate impact on international peace and security.

The Secretary-General has described areas that he wants to be reinforced. Many meetings were held last year, but a number of countries were not able to participate effectively in them. We recognize the need to increase international awareness in this regard, and we call upon all Member States to show discipline and to refrain from calling for the convening of conferences, apart from high-level conferences that discuss new questions.

We fully agree that we should not produce unnecessary reports. Reports should be shorter, their content should be better and they must be transparent and must reflect the outcome of consultations held with the countries concerned. We should eliminate the problems associated with drafting consolidated reports with the countries concerned. Countries should submit their reports in good time, and they should be available in the official languages.

The Secretary-General's report refers to adapting the work programme of the United Nations to tailor it to the Millennium Declaration goals. We support his comments with regard to delving more deeply into the causes of conflict in the face of military threats. This should become a priority for the Organization. We believe that in this respect it is important to increase support for the international campaign to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

But we should not simply provide advice to countries so that they can strengthen their legislative and administrative frameworks in order to combat terrorism. There is a need to study the causes of terrorism, too, to define it and to remedy the situation in the context of a global vision, bearing in mind the interests, concerns and security of all.

There are now so many United Nations bodies established under human rights conventions that periodic reports also have proliferated and cast heavy burdens on all countries, especially developing countries. We believe, however, that each State needs to submit a consolidated report within the context of the various United Nations bodies. We need to eliminate duplication in order to relieve the resultant financial and human burden. We hope that this goal can be achieved, in keeping with the recommendations submitted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We believe that the issue of human rights is a very important and sensitive one, and we need to show impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, as well as respect for the various cultures and their beliefs.

We very much support the role of the United Nations in helping Africa to face the numerous challenges confronting it. We are pleased that the Secretary-General has reiterated that Africa is one of the prime concerns of the United Nations. The Organization must continue to work to ensure that the African continent is given its rightful place, so that African countries can reap the fruit of their national efforts.

The cooperation between the United Nations and the international community has developed over the years, but we see in the report of the Secretary-General that it leaves something to be desired. We support the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, but some aspects need to be dealt with by the high-level

panel that the Secretary-General is seeking to establish. We hope that rules will be established guaranteeing the participation of all, in particular the non-governmental organizations of the developing countries. As the Secretary-General has said, the number of these organizations is very small compared to those in the industrialized countries.

The Secretary-General is also proposing a number of actions to try to simplify the submission of the budget and the budget outline. We believe that a medium-term plan spanning only two years would cover too short a period, so we do not think that it should be reduced.

We believe that United Nations officials, who hail from so many regions, have vast potential to offer. We support the Secretary-General's quest to recruit nationals of countries that are under-represented or not represented at all. We believe that officials should be recruited who are willing to devote their lives to this Organization and work anywhere in the world. Of course, this should not affect the recruitment of new staff members who might meet the needs of the Organization.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General should take steps that are in keeping with the suggestions contained in the report. Reforms have been suggested by the Secretary-General, but it is up to Member States to decide on them. We wish to reiterate that the delegation of my country will participate positively in this process, and we assure the President of our cooperation.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China earlier in this debate. The Jamaican delegation would like to add a few comments of its own, having studied the report of the Secretary-General on "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". We regard the proposals contained therein as important initiatives for reform, and we support their objectives.

The report builds on a process begun in 1997 and proposes adjustments to increase efficiency in the Secretariat's operations. We congratulate the Secretary-General on his vision of modernization, which is aimed at increasing efficiency in administrative arrangements in order to deliver improved service to Member States.

The Millennium Development Goals, as well as the outcomes of the global conferences held over the past decade, have set new priorities aimed, inter alia, at achieving economic and social development as well as the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and at confronting emerging new threats to international security. We agree that it is obviously necessary for the United Nations to align its programmes to meet the needs and priorities of the time. Jamaica therefore supports the proposal for action 1, which intends to bring the programme budget in line with the priorities agreed in the Millennium Declaration.

We are also favourably disposed towards the proposal for a shorter, more strategic medium-term plan covering two years rather than four. We believe that this would be better geared towards allowing pragmatic adjustments within a shorter budget cycle.

With regard to human rights, Jamaica concurs that the United Nations has an important role to play in strengthening human rights. We note the progress made in promoting human rights norms and practices and in supporting human rights at the country level. We therefore support the proposal to streamline the machinery within the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This should result in better and more cooperative arrangements between the Office and Governments and in a reduction in the current onerous levels of reporting requirements.

We also support the strengthening of the delivery of public information on United Nations activities. We generally welcome the proposals for the repositioning of the Department of Public Information.

With regard to United Nations Information Centres, my delegation recognizes the important role played by these centres in disseminating information at the country level. For developing countries, these Centres are a useful instrument for sensitizing people to the vital role of the United Nations and how it works for them. We note that the report proposes the rationalization of these Centres around regional hubs, beginning with Europe. We are mindful of the need to minimize the costs associated with maintaining the Centres, but we would caution that further plans to regionalize them should take into consideration the special needs of the regions affected.

The integration of United Nations libraries through the use of information technology is obviously

useful in improving access to information. My delegation supports measures that will bring about more efficient systems. The creation of a multilingual electronic gateway for accessing collections, documents and information is a positive step, but due consideration must be given to countries which may not have the technological capacity to access this information. We therefore believe that the delivery of information should be so constructed as to allow developing countries with varying technological capacities to be able to receive the service.

The streamlining of reports and the management of conferences and meetings are areas in which reform is needed. My delegation shares the view that there is too much duplication in the area of reports. Every effort should be made to reduce that duplication. We also agree with the need to streamline reports in order to make them more consolidated and focused, as well as with the need to achieving some reduction in the volume and frequency of reports, without sacrificing quality or comprehensiveness.

Improving coordination among the component parts of the United Nations has proven to be an effective means of confronting challenges, especially those faced by developing countries. Jamaica supports the proposal to develop an implementation plan that includes joint programming and the pooling of common resources in United Nations country offices. We regard the delivery of technical cooperation to developing countries as being of particular importance. In that connection, we must express some concern about the proposals mentioned in paragraphs 50 and 51, concerning incorporating human rights into operational activities at the country level. Our concern is with the possible diversion of resources from traditional areas of technical cooperation. We therefore look forward to the report to be presented in September 2003 and to a clarification of roles and responsibilities in the area of technical cooperation.

An important aspect of the new reforms is the system for allocating resources to priorities. The Secretary-General's proposal for simplifying and shortening the planning and budget cycle appears to be practical and workable. A medium-term plan covering two years instead of four is better geared towards allowing for pragmatic adjustments to meet new requirements and the needs of the times. There would also obviously be a need for some modification of the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which would need some further discussion.

Jamaica supports the view that the impact and vitality of the Organization rests upon having a core of international civil servants who have dedicated their careers to the service of the United Nations. The development of a comprehensive human resource policy is therefore an essential part of ensuring that the United Nations attracts and maintains top-quality staff. It is in this regard that we welcome the ongoing reform measures pertaining to human resource management aimed at encouraging mobility, enlarging opportunities for General Service staff, boosting staff morale and rejuvenating the Organization's Secretariat.

Finally, we look forward to participating in a process that will allow all Member States to be involved in reaching a consensus position on initiatives proposed in the Secretary-General's report. The strengthening of the United Nations is a process that matters to all of us, and it should be organized and reformed so as to serve our common purposes. Jamaica, as always, is ready to play its part.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia): At the outset, allow me once again to express our pleasure at seeing you, Madam, presiding over this important agenda item before the General Assembly.

I would also wish to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387).

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt elaborating Africa's non-paper on behalf of the African Group.

We believe that the Secretary-General's report is timely. I say that because two years ago we adopted the Millennium Declaration and its Millennium Development Goals. We believe that those Goals constitute not only what should define the key objective of the international community, but that they will also serve as the standard by which our collective endeavours will be judged in a decade or so. Previous reviews of internationally agreed development goals have left much to be desired, a problem that has been particularly pronounced on the African continent. I would also say that the report is timely in as far as the present agenda to strengthen the United Nations needs

to be properly managed to improve the effectiveness of the Organization with a view to more fully achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's intention to submit a thoroughly revised programme budget to the General Assembly in 2003 that better reflects the priorities agreed at the Millennium Assembly.

The General Assembly is now considering the Secretary-General's agenda for further change, at a time when the Assembly has welcomed, and Member States have expressed full support for, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to better coordinate the Secretariat's support for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in their consideration of Africa-related issues.

My delegation welcomes the development of an implementation plan by the United Nations Development Group to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization's presence in developing countries. At the same time, we would wish to encourage the Group to develop a plan for effective and increased mobilization of resources devoted to United Nations operational activities for development. My delegation is also open to consideration of the Secretary-General's request for flexibility in reallocating resources between programmes, once, of course, issues of accountability and monitoring are clarified.

With regard to human resources issues, we fully support the Secretary-General's proposal for enhancing staff mobility across the United Nations system. As one of several duty stations, Ethiopia stands ready to extend its full cooperation in this respect. We are also happy to note the intentions of the Secretary-General to increase opportunities for General Service staff. In this context, we support the request to raise the annual quota of professional posts available for successful General Service examination candidates to 25 per cent.

In the area of public information we welcome Mr. Annan's measures for attempting to turn a fragmented and ineffective Department of Public Information into one that is not defensive about the many positive activities that the United Nations has carried out and is currently involved in. To have an impact, the Department should vigorously advocate for multilateralism. What we see in many of the 71 information centres around the world is that very little information is given out, to say nothing about the Department really making a case for the United Nations. The Department is, in fact, today being attacked in many quarters. The Secretary General proposes

> "to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, starting with the creation of a Western European hub." (*A/57/387, action 8, para. 72*)

At least in Europe, that would bring the 13 current information centres into one hub. Doing so would be quite good, and we support it.

My delegation would also support giving special attention to specific countries — and I mean here certain developed ones — where what the United Nations stands for is under constant attack by some quarters in those countries. In those countries — I do not need to mention any names, we know who they are — the United Nations has to come forward, through its Department of Public Information, and stand up for all the things this Organization has been advocating since the end of the Second World War. This being the only global multilateral organization, we should not shy away from defending it. The mouthpiece of the United Nations for doing that job is the Department of Public Information. It is in that context that my delegation supports the intention of the Secretary-General to reform that Department, which, in our view, has been dormant and has not been doing its job, and that has not been for lack of staff, centres, directives, missions and mandates. So we support the proposed attempts to change the situation.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report, change is a process. The United Nations needs to change and adapt itself to meet the challenges confronting humanity: poverty eradication, sustainable development and the fight against ignorance, disease and injustice. We are not short of what needs to be done. We are not short of decisions and recommendations that have been adopted in this Assembly at the highest level. So I am not going to suggest any now. The question is not, therefore, whether there is a need for change.

The question, simply put, is whether the changes can be managed in such a way that they make the United Nations an effective instrument for averting the risk of marginalizing the majority from the process of globalization that is taking place before our very eyes. If that is averted, then we will have a healthy world. If

that is not averted, then, I am afraid, the United Nations will be a forum, as some have referred to it, that is just a debating society. I am sure that none of us would like it to be referred to as such. Coming from the country where the previous multilateral organization before the United Nations, the League of Nations, failed to act. The then-head of State of Ethiopia, Emperor Haile Selassie, made a plea and his plea was not listened to, and we know, of course, what happened to that organization. I am quite confident that the same will not happen to this Organization, as long as we all stand up for what it stands for.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): I wish to thank the President for convening this debate on an issue of cardinal importance to Nepal and the global community. I also commend the Secretary-General for his report on this agenda item and for introducing it to the plenary, that report furnishes the substance for our discussion.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal for reform of the United Nations. We believe it is a good proposal with tremendous prospects for improving the work of the world body. That broad spectrum of recommendations is a big next step in the continuum of reforms the Secretary-General has undertaken thus far. As the proposal has far-reaching implications, it calls for most careful consideration on the part of Member States.

Reforms are to an organization what oxygen is to our body. The oxygen of reforms must therefore continue to flow to keep the United Nations alive and robust so that it can stand up to its emerging challenges. Otherwise, institutional atrophy will set in. Bearing that in mind, the heads of State or Government have, through the Millennium Declaration, told us what to do in a shared quest for a more peaceful and prosperous world in which human rights, justice and the rule of law are respected and promoted. The Monterrey, Doha and Johannesburg conferences have told us how to do it, and in order to do it all we need a stronger United Nations.

Nepal broadly agrees with the Secretary-General's diagnosis of the maladies from which the United Nations suffers and with many of his prescriptions to remedy the situation. For instance, we concur with him that the General Assembly needs to rationalize its agenda further and the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions need to define and coordinate their tasks better. At the same time, we also believe that no reform of the United Nations would be complete without Security Council reforms, which are stalled now.

More specifically, we believe that the Secretary-General's recommendations to reform the United Nations will add tremendous value to our work and to the service the world body provides to the citizens of this planet. However, we need more technical detail on most, if not all, of his recommendations before arriving at a more informed judgment. Therefore, my delegation urges the Secretary-General to provide the essential details quickly that substantiate his recommendations. Still, let me make a few general comments at this stage on some of the specific proposals of the Secretary-General.

There is a clear necessity to align the budget with the United Nations priorities and to review the linkage between the budget and the medium-term plan, so that both of them remain relevant. There is also an imperative to review the budget formulation and processing mechanisms with a view to streamlining them both. In that respect, the Secretary-General has made serious and far-reaching recommendations, which, my delegation believes, deserve a serious and thorough examination by Member States before they arrive at a conclusion. Member States should consider the issue of flexibility for budget reallocations in the context of the necessity to maintain their legislative control over the budget.

Improving human rights management and streamlining the reporting requirements is vital for us all, so that small and poor nations can also meet their obligations. We also broadly recognize that there is a need to reposition the Department of Public Information and to reform the United Nations Library so as to provide better service to Member States, particularly to developing countries.

Restructuring United Nations Information Centres would be detrimental to the interests of information-poor developing countries if it were to lead to the weakening or closing of Information Centres in those countries.

While welcoming the measures to make reports more analytical, sharply focused and consolidated, Nepal underscores the need to exercise caution so that this process does not lead to compromise in the quality or availability of documents Member States desire.

We cannot concur more with the Secretary-General that there is a palpable need to better plan official meetings and conferences. As a small delegation trying to come to grips with the astonishing scope of the work of the United Nations, we know how strenuous and painful it can be to cover numerous parallel meetings of critical importance to us. However, better planning of meetings and conferences should not give way to selectivity in consultations.

Although the efforts to pool system-wide resources to improve the coherence, synergy and effectiveness of the United Nations system are welcome, we need to know how this proposal is going to be implemented. Our concern is that this should not dilute the priority and focus of the relevant constituent parts of the United Nations, or deprive them of dynamism in their activities.

The initiative to clarify roles and responsibilities across a broad spectrum of the issues and operations dealt with by the United Nations is long overdue. We would, however, want to see more detailed information on this issue. Meanwhile, we are convinced that the departments that are expected to help to implement the Monterrey and Johannesburg outcomes must not be curtailed or have their capacities impaired in the process. In that context, we fully support the strengthening of the office of the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa.

Nepal espouses most of the measures that have been outlined by the Secretary-General to improve human resources management at the United Nations. However, we would have appreciated the inclusion of measures to respond to such important questions as to how efficiency could be enhanced, redundancy eliminated and perquisites strongly linked with performance. Likewise, the steps to eliminate waste, improve the efficiency of the Organization and remove the serious geographical imbalance that exists in the United Nations civil service would have attenuated our long-standing concerns.

From my long experience in administrative reforms, I have come to the following conclusion: those who want to maintain the status quo should strive for gradual reform. Those who want gradual reform should strive for ambitious reform. Those who want radical reform are not reformers at all. Reform we must, however, if we want to maintain relevance and vitality.

The Secretary-General's second wave of reforms is a big step forward in the right direction. We should encourage him to implement those recommendations that already fall within his mandate. On the other hand, Member States should urgently and carefully examine recommendations that require fresh mandates for the Secretary-General. That is something we must do once detailed information becomes available. We believe that would be the right approach in moving forward.

I wish to assure the President that my delegation will extend its full support to his effort to facilitate the earliest possible implementation of the proposed reforms.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada): The timely, challenging and forward-looking report of our discerning Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), which we are now debating, can enhance our programme of work for years to come, if it is objectively and conscientiously assessed.

In order to strengthen the United Nations, now in its fifty-eighth year of useful, constructive and humanitarian service to humankind, we must engage in dispassionate self-analysis and self-criticism with respect to the modus operandi and the modus vivendi of our Organization. It is my intention to touch briefly on the former and, in the interest of a division of labour, to leave the latter to my more sophisticated and philosophically minded colleagues.

If an agenda for change involves change or reform for the better, we as Member States must measure up to the challenge and take the bull by the horns to institute corrective measures.

The dynamics of change are usually played out in three ways, even when change is positive and desirable. First, there is doubt, followed by resistance and, finally, acceptance. That is amply borne out by the many years that we have been debating reform of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Where are we presently — Still doubting, still resisting or a combination of both? When are we going to face the fact that there are very few certainties in the world, but that one certainty is that of change? It is inevitable. Sometimes it can be for the better, and sometimes for the worse. That is why we have to be so careful about instituting change.

That having been said, one must be blind in one eye and not able to see in the other not to discern that the least painful and most economical change that the United Nations can undertake in the first instance is to reduce the number and duration of statements and reports. To do that we must have the political will to overcome our addiction to obfuscating and repetitive rhetoric, thereby sparing one another excessive verbal punishment. More importantly, however, consider the time and money that can be saved if we only change our modus operandi in that regard. The Organization can benefit considerably by clustering recurrent agenda items for the purpose of greater economy in time, talent and finance.

Additionally, it would seem that the different agenda items allocated for debate and approval, whether by vote or consensus, to each of the six Main Committees by the General Assembly, can be streamlined so that there should be no need to send the same items back to the General Assembly for approval. This seems redundant, as delegations hardly ever change their positions in a matter of days. Streamlining the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees can lessen duplication, confusion and redundancy — all of which diminish the proper utilization of our time.

President John F. Kennedy in one of his profound statements said that "we should use time as a tool, not as a couch." Time is our greatest ally and asset and, if well-apportioned and utilized, can be the basis of a philosophy of life as contained in the following treatise.

Take time to think — it is a source of power. Take time to read — it is the foundation of wisdom. Take time to work — it is the price of success. Take time to play — it is the secret of perpetual youth. Take time to pray — it is the greatest power on Earth. Take time to laugh — it is music to the soul. Take time to be charitable — it is the road to Heaven.

In the interest of time, I have touched only briefly upon one aspect of agenda change in the modus operandi of our organization — less loquaciousness and more persuasive speech. This brings to mind the divine admonition: "Let thy speech be short, encompassing much in few words" (*The Holy Bible, Ecclesiasticus 32:8*), for very often speech can be a device to say nothing. Additionally, there are so many of us who can say nothing and can say it so well. In this connection, the advice of a speech professor is so apropos to the present situation:

> "When you speak, govern yourself by the three Bs: be brief, be bright and be gone."

Before going, however, let me reaffirm the faith and confidence of my country and my delegation in the United Nations, the parliament of mankind, by recalling the compliment which the first and longest serving Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, now retired, Sir Brian Urquhart, paid to the United Nations. "If the United Nations did not exist, it would have to be invented." Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, of beloved and revered memory, put it best with respect to our Organization and our human frailty when he said: "The United Nations was not intended to take us to heaven, but to save us from hell."

Finally, as I began with the dynamics of change, let me end with the philosophy of change taken from an ancient psalmist and philosopher:

> "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): It is always difficult to follow the Permanent Representative of Grenada. However, I am going to be my own self.

My delegation would like at the outset to associate itself with the statements made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77; the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; and the representative of Egypt on behalf of the African Group. My delegation would like to build on the positive tone of those statements and make additional contributions here and there.

My delegation is in complete agreement with the proposal of the President of the General Assembly that, after the plenary debate is concluded, there be a series of informal consultations of the whole. Here, we would like to stress that consultations should be guided by transparency and a strategic approach, rather than get into the time-consuming details, which are interesting but will lead us nowhere. It is my delegation's contention that the attraction of some delegations to discussing details may be conditioned by the prescriptive nature of the report itself. Our major focus, however, should be on providing such guidance and

decisions that will, in the words of the Secretary-General,

> "make the United Nations a more effective instrument in the hands of the world's peoples". (*A/54/2000, para. 367*)

The reform package, which is well articulated by the Secretary-General, is a continuation of the process he launched in 1997, which Member States welcomed and approved. That experience was very rewarding in that all Member States were involved and the outcome was quite positive, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report. It is our hope, that this time around, the same spirit will prevail.

I hasten to add that, since the debate started yesterday, there have been very animated presentations and concrete suggestions that I believe will inform the consultations that will follow. My delegation is of the view that we can avoid a lengthy debate on technicalities if, during the coming informal meetings, the Secretariat can provide concise additional clarifications. These could be published as official documents to complement or supplement the Secretary-General's report, as appropriate.

Let me now touch briefly on some of the reform proposals. To start with, my delegation commends the Secretary-General for his intention to reflect the priorities set out in the Millennium Declaration in the work of the Organization. It is the hope of my delegation that we can all endorse that objective. Given that the Declaration was made at the Summit, one hopes that such alignment will be system-wide. The Development Goals are currently being factored into a number of the priorities of the Member States, including my own.

Secondly, my delegation welcomes the thrust of the proposals to revamp and energize the way the Organization communicates its mission and developments to the Member States and to the rest of the global community. Our only caution is directed at action on information centres. My delegation would like to emphasize that centres in the developing countries require strengthening in terms of both personnel and resources. I need hardly emphasize that the people in the developing countries need the United Nations more and not less.

Thirdly, as far as the strengthening of the Secretariat is concerned, my delegation is in broad agreement. However, two concerns need to be borne in mind. On the one hand, Africa needs more than cosmetic attention in the Secretariat. The problems of conflicts, diseases and development are real. Coordination at that level is vital if the resources directed to the continent by a myriad of channels in the United Nations family are to have the desired impact. The other refers to skilfully striking a balance in strengthening the bureaucracy without undermining the democratic involvement of Member States. It is important to constantly bear in mind that any reduction of meetings should not be at the expense of the democratic participation of Member States.

Fourthly, my delegation would like to emphasize that when it comes to proposals on subjects that have treaty bodies, it is imperative to consult States parties to the relevant conventions on the measures envisaged to streamline reporting procedures and on the implementation of their obligations under those entities.

In the Secretary-General's report, there are quite a number of proposals and comments on reforms that require attention and action by Member States. I have in mind here the reform and expansion of the Security Council and the strengthening of the General Assembly. It is my delegation's hope that the President will devote one or several informal meetings to those areas of reform, so that when we finish deliberations we can say that we have covered all aspects.

We could possibly have made comments on many more aspects of the report. But suffice it to say that many of the previous interventions have been in tune with our thinking. We need to focus on the strengthening of the Organization, so that Member States, without exception, can feel comfortable serving it and using it.

It is our intention to take an active part in the informal consultations. For now, however, we welcome the thrust of the reform package.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): There is a famous saying from medieval times: "The times are changing and we are changing with them". When applied to the United Nations, that phrase can easily provoke one to think, "If only it were that easy". We routinely use the phrase "a rapidly changing world". Reform in a time of globalization is a clear imperative for everyone who believes that the United Nations, as the only organization of global reach, must play a

leading role in shaping a process which is viewed with suspicion in many quarters in the world.

Reform is thus not necessarily — and certainly not only — a recognition of the fact that we have to change our ways — even though there is of that — but also that we have to adjust to new challenges. We thus certainly subscribe to the need for further reform.

The reform process will be an important part of the legacy of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He has rightly identified reform as an ongoing process and has made it a priority of his entire tenure as the Secretary-General. We agree that a strategic decision is needed on the proposed agenda for further change, and we are ready to subscribe to the overall direction and the principles of the report before us (A/57/387).

Many of the reform measures proposed in the report are management decisions which are entirely within the Secretary-General's discretion. Others require action from intergovernmental bodies, which brings us to an important aspect of reform: looking back over the past few years, we cannot but conclude that, while major changes have been undertaken within the Secretariat, we, as Member States, have not delivered, or certainly not enough. Reform, and thus strengthening, of the main organs of the Organization is a necessity, and the proposals of the Secretary-General in that respect are very useful.

Debates on reform tend to be anticlimactic. We start out with great enthusiasm for what we all view as a necessity and are quickly bogged down in lengthy discussions about certain aspects which seem to be of particular importance to some of us. The problem is that pretty much everything we discuss in this building is of particular importance to some of us. As the current Chairman of the Third Committee, I hear daily and from all sides that documentation should be downsized, but I have yet to hear from any main sponsor of a draft resolution that a report on the implementation of its resolution is not necessary. If we think reform comes from good deeds by others, we will never carry it out.

The President took the Chair.

Reform discussions thus tend to be frustrating, but we believe that effective reform is feasible if we keep in mind what we have in common and, against that background, compromise on what we might not necessarily agree on.

Our collective interest lies in an effective, credible and truly representative United Nations. Some of the discussions of the past few weeks, in our view, have made this eminently clear, and it is what we see as our common goal in this and any reform debate. This should also enable us to overcome the North-South divide that tends to be a very troubling phenomenon on the occasion of reform debates. There is a greater and a common good at stake.

The strong emphasis placed by the report on the Millennium Declaration is a political necessity. The Millennium Declaration as a whole and the Millennium Development Goals in particular will constitute an important yardstick to measure the success and failure of the Organization as a whole in the coming years. It is thus clear to us that the United Nations needs to align its activities with the priorities identified at the Millennium Summit and at the global conferences of the past decade, especially in a situation where we must admit to already running behind schedule with regard to the implementation of the ambitious Millennium Development Goals.

In a comprehensive approach to reform — which is needed — one should perhaps refrain from comments on specific aspects of the package. However, in the light of the debate that has unfolded, we would like to state on this occasion that we of course agree with the attention given to the review of the human rights area in the framework of our reform efforts. We do not believe, however, that this could possibly dilute the traditional and necessary focus of the Organization on the area of development. To the contrary, we believe very strongly in the interdependence of issues of peace and security, development and human rights. Strengthening one of those areas will thus necessarily also strengthen the others.

The key points of the report — doing what matters, serving Member States better, working better together, allocating resources to priorities and investing in excellence — are principles to which we fully subscribe and are a good reflection of what is needed today. We therefore fully support your intention, Mr. President, to quickly bring about the political endorsement by the General Assembly of the agenda for further change.

Mr. Huntley (Saint Lucia): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group

of 77 and China. But we also wanted to put forward some of our views on the Secretary-General's report (A/57/387 and Corr.1). First let me compliment the Secretary-General on his frank and thought-provoking report and on his efforts to strengthen the Organization by trying to effect the acceptance of change in its methods of operation and in the perspective which it brings to the implementation of its mandate. Very often, huge bureaucracies are resistant to change. Individuals within the bureaucratic machine are horrified at the suggestion of even the slightest tinkering with the manner of operation that they have perpetuated over decades. They forget why they are where they are and make their manner of operation their mission, rather than being a servant of their real mission. For daring to strike out in a very different direction, the Secretary-General deserves our praise.

The Secretary-General's report focuses on two areas for change: first, the intergovernmental organs and, secondly, the Secretariat and its work programme. In this statement, we will limit ourselves to some preliminary thoughts on the first area: the intergovernmental organs.

My delegation agrees wholeheartedly with the Secretary-General's view that the intergovernmental organs, too, must change. We firmly believe that the change must start with the way we as representatives of Governments conduct our business. If we do not change, then change in the Secretariat alone will not strengthen the United Nations. For that reason, we fully agree with paragraphs 15 to 24 of the report, which outline the weaknesses in the General Assembly: the many overlapping items, the sterile and repetitive debates and reports that waste time, the limited resolutions and agenda items that come up like recurring decimals and the duplication of items. The report refers also to the need for more focus in the Economic and Social Council, the disgraceful stalling of Security Council reform and the proliferation of meetings by the intergovernmental bodies. For smaller Missions such as ours, the report's observation in paragraph 23 is very correct: "Many smaller Member States now find it practically impossible to play a meaningful role in even the most crucial activities of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council."

We therefore wish to exchange some preliminary ideas on how we may address those deficiencies and enable small Missions to participate more effectively in the deliberations of the body. First, the General Assembly convenes in early September for a session that ends the following September. Yet, from the moment of its convening, we are — as we say in the Caribbean — running around like mad fowls, caught up in a frenzy of activity on six Main Committees, the Security Council, subsidiary bodies, regional groups and plenary meetings of the Assembly, all competing, in a frantic spasm of meetings, to complete their work programmes by mid-December. Why do we subject ourselves to that unnecessary stress when we have the use of the full period of an 11-month session for a more leisurely and meaningful consideration of the work before us? Could not the Main Committees meet over a longer period of time? Could they not meet without plenary meetings taking place at the same time? And could we not alternate between meetings of the Committees and plenary meetings? We should thus take a serious look at how we organize the work of the General Assembly.

Then, we have the other practice of subsidiary bodies and committees meeting three quarters of the way through a session, with their work being presented for approval at the following session of the General Assembly and not at the session in which it started.

Might it not make more sense for our sessions to be organized in the following manner? After a session of the General Assembly is opened with its general debate on policy, subsidiary bodies could meet on their work programmes. Their reports would go to the Main Committees, which would forward their recommendations to the Assembly. It would all end in one session of the General Assembly, with the Committees meeting consecutively, and not in parallel, over the course of the year.

There is also the question of how we organize work in the Committees. Is it necessary, every year, to have a general debate in the Committees on the same items that come up before us every year, where we reproduce the same sterile statements with minor changes from those we delivered the previous year? Can we not simply move to informal and more meaningful discussions of draft resolutions tied to a given item?

Then there is the question of the draft resolutions that the General Assembly deals with every year. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly considered approximately 300 draft resolutions. Were they all

necessary? How much impact will they have on the daily lives of the people whom we represent? We recognize that this is a political and not a legislative world body, and that some resolutions are adopted for their political, not legislative, impact. But there are times when we do indeed act as a legislative body: when we punish States for not adhering to some of our resolutions. No serious body adopts the same legislation twice. It amends, strengthens or removes a piece of legislation. Could we not have a system in which once a resolution is adopted, it goes into our statute books, is referred to when necessary and is amended or even discarded, but is not adopted over and over again?

Perhaps what we need to do is to decide at a future session — say, next session — not to adopt any resolutions at all. We would then spend our time examining all the resolutions from the present session and deciding which ones we need to put in our reference book and which ones we need to discard.

Finally, my delegation would like to comment briefly on one proposal in the section of the report dealing with the Secretariat: the establishment of a partnership office. The increasing role of the private sector in the global economy needs more than a voluntary initiative like the Global Compact or a partnership office for group partnerships. There is need for an intergovernmental monitoring mechanism to ensure accountability and a positive contribution to sustainable development; this can best be served by a reinstatement of the transnational corporations unit of the United Nations.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): I would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, whose tireless efforts in promoting the reform of the United Nations since assuming office deserve not only words of praise but, first and foremost, our active support. The substantial progress achieved in the reform effort since 1997 hardly means that we can at last breathe easily. But it does mean that we can move ahead with confidence in our ability to work together to achieve success.

The efficiency of the functioning of the United Nations is, and always will be, judged on the Organization's ability to respond adequately to the challenges confronting humanity, no matter how difficult and complicated they might be. That underscores the need for both Member States and the Secretariat to place the functioning of the United Nations under periodic review in order to be able to make the timely adjustments, improvements and changes that are necessary.

Ukraine welcomes the new package of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1). We fully subscribe to its key objectives aimed at making the United Nations a more effective instrument in multilateral relations through, to use the words of the Secretary-General, doing what matters, serving Member States better, working better together, allocating resources to priorities and investing in excellence.

Ukraine encourages the Secretary-General to proceed with the implementation of the proposals and recommendations that fall exclusively within his purview. My country is ready to work hard to reach decisions concerning the recommendations that require appropriate actions by intergovernmental bodies. We are also looking forward to further detailed information and clarifications, including specific follow-up reports due to be submitted within the next year.

It is important, in our view, to ensure that we proceed in an open and transparent manner, with genuine dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat. To a large extent, our hopes in that regard rely on the leadership of the President of the General Assembly, and I want to take this opportunity to assure him of the full support and understanding of my delegation in his efforts to achieve tangible results.

At this point, I should like to comment briefly on some of the proposals contained in the report.

First, Ukraine shares the view that the activities of the Organization should be aligned with the priorities and the objectives of the Millennium Declaration and with the decisions of past global conferences. In that regard, we look forward to a thoroughly revised programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 that reflects the Organization's new priorities and takes into account the views of concerned States with regard to other existing mandates. We are convinced that such a major undertaking requires prior endorsement by Member States of the modalities for formulating the next budget so that it follows the agreed format.

Secondly, we consider the proposals of the Secretary-General in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights to be very timely and important. We fully share the view that the Commission on Human Rights should operate with the highest possible level of integrity, credibility and effectiveness. As a current member of the Commission, Ukraine realizes that body's heavy responsibility in upholding international human rights standards in a new world environment coping with threats of terrorism and other challenges. We find very useful the proposal on a more coordinated approach to the activities of the treaty bodies, on the standardization of various reporting requirements and on the possibility of each State producing a single report summarizing its adherence to the full range of international human rights treaties. The proposal to improve the special procedures is also, in our view, long overdue.

Thirdly, we believe — and I am sure everyone will agree — that it is of paramount importance to streamline the United Nations and to improve the planning and the servicing of meetings, which would make our work more focused and efficient and would greatly contribute to the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. But we should not limit ourselves to a mechanical approach towards the consolidation of reports. Therefore, additional clarification with regard to this very important issue would be extremely valuable.

Fourthly, we agree with the Secretary-General that the time has come to reform the existing process of planning, budgeting and evaluation. Such reform should result in the creation of a transparent, strategically oriented and streamlined budget that not only allocates resources to priority areas, but also is flexible enough to adjust both to the changing needs of the Organization and to the results of evaluation findings. In the current budgetary process, the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination regarding the budget's programme aspects is indispensable. We also see merit in giving fresh consideration to the Secretary-General's proposal on sunset provisions to provide for the systematic review of the impact and relevance of the Organization's activities in implementing its mandates.

Fifthly, the importance of equipping the Organization with an effective and efficient system of internal administration cannot be overstated. Prudent staff management is one of the most essential conditions for the success of its activities. Here, further steps are needed to improve the system of delegating authority in order to spread best management practices throughout the Secretariat. It is equally important to ensure high staff motivation and morale, which should be underpinned by competitive conditions of service and balanced between recognition of performance and enforcement of accountability. We believe that much needs to be done to ensure equitable geographical representation of Member States, especially in senior-level and high-level posts, within the Secretariat.

Finally, I should like to mention that the Secretary-General, in his report, correctly points to the vital need to push forward with Security Council reform. In addition, advancing reform of the Economic and Social Council — another important body — through strengthening its coordinating role in the economic and social spheres, and efforts to revitalize the General Assembly should not be put at the bottom of our agenda.

The authority and the efficiency of the Organization depend totally on its membership. If we wish to see it truly reformed and revitalized, we must show that through our practical deeds. We must prove that peoples can continue to rely on the United Nations and that the Organization is prepared to respond to new challenges and to withstand any test.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/57/387) on the strengthening of the United Nations. My country supports reform of the United Nations, because it believes that the Organization has before it extraordinary challenges that it must face effectively.

The report submitted to us has been the subject of numerous consultations and comments in the context of regional groups and various negotiating groups. My delegation takes a positive and constructive attitude towards the reform. We completely agree with the report's focus and its general guidelines, which we believe will make the Organization more agile and reinforce some areas of work that we consider essential.

We hope that once you, Sir, call for informal consultations, we will be able to work on the acceptance by consensus of a resolution through which the most urgent reforms can be implemented and

progress can be made towards strengthening the Organization.

As a contribution, my delegation would like to formulate some observations and comments on some of the main issues found in the report.

The proposals on human rights seem positive to us. The promotion and protection of these rights are an objective inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations. This is, therefore, a dimension that should be taken into account in all activities. The proposed actions serve to make the international protection of human rights more effective, because the dispersal and proliferation of current mechanisms could make the system less operative. We are waiting for the proposals of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with regard to the future work of the treaty bodies and the special procedures. In this field streamlining is necessary, so that each body may more efficiently play its role of monitoring the international commitments made by States.

In due time, the proposals of the report should be enriched by specific recommendations derived from the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits. In this respect, we think it is appropriate to be specific. For example, the regional commissions should be strengthened so that they can broaden their approach to the integration of economic, social and environment issues, as was decided in Johannesburg.

This subject has been advocated by Latin American countries, in support of the role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and should not be omitted from the recommendations, which may imply a redistribution of resources.

On the subject of public information, we think that in the production of news the few existing multilingual channels, such as radio programmes and traditional media, should be strengthened because the public in developing countries does not always speak English and does not have easy access to the electronic media. We also believe that there should be more thorough discussion of the role of the Committee on Public Information in the elaboration of strategic communications and, in general, of the public-information work of the United Nations. It would be important to have a debate on what the role of this body will be after the proposed reforms are carried out.

The measures proposed in the report to solve the shortcomings in the current process of budgeting and planning are, as we see it, those that need more detailed follow-up and thorough elaboration, in order to determine the most appropriate course of action.

An example would be the proposal concerning the elimination of the Committee for Programming and Coordination. Consideration should be given to what bodies might absorb its budgeting functions. As regards the medium-term plan, which now is adopted for four years and sets the basic objectives and strategies for the Organization, limiting its coverage to two years and having it coincide with the biennial budget might mean that the main objective would be lost and there would be the risk of it getting confused with the budget itself.

We agree with the Secretary-General about the need to simplify the process of preparing and adopting the medium-term plan. But it is important to discuss in greater detail the need to shorten the period it covers.

Finally, we agree with the proposal concerning the need to have a stricter system of evaluation and monitoring, since the existing system is somewhat diffuse, because there are a number of bodies responsible for this task.

With regard to the Organization and its personnel, we agree with the Secretary-General that it is necessary to increase the mobility of the staff throughout the United Nations system. In this respect, Argentina attaches special importance to the work of the International Civil Service Commission, whose scope covers the entire United Nations system.

I would like to express my support for the way you plan to proceed, Sir. My delegation will participate in the informal consultations and will develop some of the points that I have just mentioned. I am fully prepared to work towards a consensus solution as soon as possible and thus start the reforms that we are awaiting.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Having listened to the statement of my friend, the representative of Grenada, I do not have much to add. But, since I sent the text of my statement to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have to read it aloud.

Our delegation wishes to express sincere thanks to you, Sir, for giving us the opportunity to discuss the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening

of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387). It is a report that has gained the attention of most delegations, creating a long list of speakers. But since time is of the essence, our delegation will not be able to deal with all the issues contained in the report. We would like to affirm that we will participate effectively in the work of the relevant United Nations bodies and we will have both the opportunity and the time to exchange points of view with objectivity and transparency.

Our delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the valuable efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in the areas of strengthening the role of the Organization, so that it can face the challenges and international changes with flexibility, dynamism and transparency.

This comprehensive report has come in response to the call of the General Assembly in its resolution 55/2 entitled the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which the heads of State or Government stressed their individual and collective responsibility towards their societies to enforce the principles of dignity, humanity, equality and justice for the whole world's population, particularly the most vulnerable. To achieve peace, security, development, the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease, protection of the environment, human rights, democracy, combating injustice, violence, terrorism and crime, the international community must make tremendous efforts so that the United Nations can become a more effective tool in achieving the above-mentioned goals, not only for our generation but for future generations as well.

In this context, we wish to reaffirm once again the vital role of the General Assembly in effectively discharging its duties as the principal organ for deliberating on issues and for adopting decisions and policies. We think that the Assembly should redouble its efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council as well as encourage streamlining, coordination and regular consultations among the main organs of the United Nations. We should also continue to strengthen the Economic and Social Council as well as the International Court of Justice to assist them in playing their Charter-mandated role.

In this respect, we call on the Secretariat to use the available resources, in accordance with clear-cut rules of procedure decided on by the General Assembly in the interests of all Member States, to adopt the best technological and managerial practices available, and to concentrate on those tasks that reflect the priorities set by all the Member States.

The report of the Secretary-General stresses the importance of strengthening the United Nations and its programmes of action and of bringing about additional changes in future. It is a timely and necessary report, particularly at a time when we are facing numerous challenges stemming from globalization.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General and support all his efforts to strengthen the Organization. We believe that a stronger and more effective United Nations will be able to play a vital role and fulfil its responsibilities and carry out its tasks under the Charter, placing strong emphasis on the Millennium Declaration.

The Secretary-General called on the Member States to undertake a strategic dialogue among themselves to determine the most appropriate ways and means to strengthen the Organization. Our delegation is fully prepared to help in this respect, and we will place this question on our agenda. All Member States have a joint responsibility to determine how best to strengthen the United Nations.

The Secretary-General puts forward very important and comprehensive ideas and recommendations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations in this increasingly globalized world. His proposals should be viewed in the context of the resolutions of the Millennium Declaration, the outcome of the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit for Sustainable Development, and the mandates handed down by those conferences, so that the General Assembly can assume its responsibility in a collective and transparent manner.

The reform of the United Nations should be an ongoing process, not an end in itself. That is why we should adopt clear follow-up mechanisms and with respect to the programme budget of the United Nations.

The report of the Secretary-General stresses the relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations as well as the organizations of civil society in all fields. He emphasized the importance of non-governmental organizations and of their participation in international

conferences and special sessions, and on occasion even in the General Assembly.

The rapidly increasing number of non-governmental organizations has put tremendous pressure on the resources of the United Nations. It is materially impossible to absorb all the non-governmental organizations asking to participate in United Nations conferences and meetings. Moreover, there seems to be an imbalance between the number of non-governmental organizations from industrialized countries and those from developing countries wishing to participate in the activities of the United Nations.

That is why we view with concern the pressure being put on the human and financial resources of the United Nations. We should limit this participation, bearing in mind the need to strike a proper balance between the non-governmental organizations of industrialized and of developing countries.

In this respect, we suggest that the United Nations consider the possibility of requiring a contribution by the non-governmental organizations so that they may participate and also to cover some of the expenses involved.

The report also mentions the fact that, for the work of the United Nations to reflect the priorities of the Millennium Declaration, the Organization should put in place a flexible and efficient system that would allocate sufficient resources to such priorities. This would require adequate planning and budgeting in order to adapt to the dynamic environment in which the Organization is working and to give the work of the Organization and of Member States a results-oriented approach.

The Secretary-General states that the present system has failed because the Member States do not always pay their contributions in full and on time and because the regular budget cannot keep pace with the rate of inflation, whereas the activities of the Organization are multiplying very rapidly.

In this respect, I should like to state that, while the international community wishes to improve the productivity of the United Nations, we must bear in mind the very difficult economic circumstances of many countries, especially developing States, which makes it difficult for them to pay the higher contributions required. For that reason, the United Nations should act wisely and shoulder some responsibility with respect to those expenses and control expenditures, so as not to put pressure on the developing countries and make them pay more than they can possibly afford.

We look forward to an amended programme budget, which is to be submitted to the General Assembly in 2003. We hope that it will reflect the priorities of the medium-term plan as well as the Millennium Declaration Goals. Any additional financial requirements for proposed reforms must be very carefully evaluated before they are approved.

Last but not least, we call on the Secretary-General to submit improved programme budgets and more detailed proposals concerning the medium-term plan that reflect the recommendations contained in the Millennium Declaration and provide improved working conditions for the United Nations staff, who should be proud of serving the United Nations and who want to feel that they are part of an effective Organization devoted to serving humanity as a whole.

We would like to reiterate in this respect the full support of our delegation for the reform process, bearing in mind the need to hold very constructive informal consultations and deliberations among Member States to discuss the Secretary-General's recommendations, to elaborate proposals that will garner a consensus from the international community and to submit them to the General Assembly for consideration, adoption and implementation.

We would like once again to stress the fact that we should not bring pressure to bear on the developing countries, whose resources are limited, and that we should also simplify the working procedures of the Organization and reduce the number of meetings and reports.

Mr. Dube (Botswana): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session, and for the excellent manner in which you have conducted our deliberations thus far. You will certainly be able to count on the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Botswana throughout your tenure.

Upon assuming office in 1997, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, launched the United Nations on a far-reaching path of reform. The objective was, in his words,

> "to identify the ways in which the United Nations can more effectively and efficiently meet the challenges that lie ahead as we enter a new century, and a new millennium." (*A/51/950*)

Undoubtedly, the implementation of some of the measures, strategies and actions that were proposed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950), significantly enhanced the capacity of our Organization to effectively undertake what we the Member States require of it.

But, as the Secretary-General rightly pointed out, reform is a continuous process, rather than an event. The United Nations may be a better Organization today as compared with two decades ago. That should not however, suggest that we have completely achieved our goal. In fact, much more remains to be done to advance the reform process.

Botswana fully supports the continued commitment of the Secretary-General to transform the United Nations into a credible and robust multilateral institution. The proposals and actions outlined in his report (A/57/387) are a step in the right direction, and must be considered with an open mind.

The report, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", is very timely, since it affords us the opportunity to take stock of the achievements and failures of the United Nations since its inception and the reforms initiated in 1997.

In order for the reform process to be successful, a close partnership between the Secretariat and Member States is crucial. As the chief administrative officer of the Organization, the Secretary-General can fulfil his functions only if he has the assured and full political and material support of the Member States from whom he derives his mandates.

As already pointed out by several earlier speakers, the most recent report of the Secretary-General contains many positive elements. However, we believe that some ideas will require further clarification so as to enable Member States to take informed decisions. We therefore associate ourselves with the list of questions forwarded to the Deputy Secretary-General by Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, answers to which we believe will facilitate a further exchange of views between the Secretariat and Member States.

We also appreciate the clarifications made during the informal briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General with regard to the fact that the report was a "strategic document" intended primarily to stimulate discussion by Member States.

My delegation accepts that there are actions in his reform proposals that fall directly within the purview of the Secretary-General and do not require explicit approval by Member States. We encourage the clear identification and implementation of those actions without delay. There are, however, other actions contained in the Secretary-General's report that we believe require thorough consideration and analysis by Member States before he implements them.

As we consider the report, Botswana will want to reflect on its impact on those issues that are dear to Africa. In this regard, we want to draw the Secretary-General's attention to the outcome of the high-level plenary meeting on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), held on 16 and 17 September 2002. We believe that that discussion and the conclusions of the debate brought into focus important issues which Africa has decided will govern its future development. We therefore believe that, through the reform process, there should be an integrated approach to how the United Nations will work hand-in-hand with Africa to assist the continent to achieve its goals as set out in NEPAD.

Botswana fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen respect worldwide for all recognized human rights. We also believe that the role and functions of the Commission on Human Rights, the treaty bodies and special procedures should be enhanced and should not become the victim of our narrow interests.

My delegation shares the view that a great deal still needs to be done to strengthen the capacity of Member States to implement human rights principles and practices at the national level. It is important that these efforts be made with the full collaboration of the concerned Member States.

We have carefully studied the proposed measures and actions regarding the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, and I will limit my remarks to a few of those issues.

We strongly support the idea of simplifying the manner in which we conduct our work in the United

Nations, including in the management of our conferences and meetings. Too many prolonged and unproductive meetings cannot, in any way, be a good indicator of efficiency and productivity. We share the view that we need a results-based approach in our intergovernmental negotiations, facilitated by less support documentation that is more reader-friendly.

Measures to streamline reports requested by, and provided to meetings of Member States, and adherence to page limits, are welcomed by my delegation, as long as the quality of information provided is not compromised.

We also support the proposed measures on streamlining the management of trust funds, including the elimination of any duplication in the programme planning and budgetary process of the United Nations.

We have yet to understand, however, the rationale for the proposed changes concerning the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in the programmatic aspects of the budgetary process, as well as the proposed shortening of the medium-term plan. The role of the CPC, as the subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, can be improved to enable it to effectively perform its functions, in accordance with its terms of reference annexed to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX) of 14 May 1976.

We would therefore propose that, at its forty-third session in 2003, the CPC should intensify its discussions, under the relevant item already on its agenda, aimed at improving its working methods. The important role performed by the CPC in ensuring the effective coordination of the functions of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and other entities within the United Nations system must be recognized.

Furthermore, the rationale for shortening the Organization's medium-term plan from the current four years to two also requires further explanation. The medium-term plan, as the framework for the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the main policy directive of the United Nations, should be of a reasonable duration to enable projection of the activities of the Organization over a reasonable timeframe.

We believe that a sound financial and human resources management policy is key to the success of any organization, including the United Nations. The staff of the United Nations is an invaluable asset of this Organization in contributing to furthering the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

There must be continued emphasis on investment in staff training to ensure that the United Nations enjoys the service of a dynamic and capable international civil service. Also requiring emphasis is the enhancing of staff mobility; rejuvenating of the "ageing Secretariat"; and a strengthening of the internal justice system to ensure amicable resolution of staff-management disputes.

An important area that also needs urgent attention is the composition of our Secretariat, which is yet to reflect the requirements of a multinational organization.

While we appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to create a better geographical representation of staff in the United Nations Secretariat, more remains to be done with regard to addressing the long-standing concerns of the inadequately represented Member States, mainly developing countries — my country included.

We encourage additional measures to be taken to significantly improve employment opportunities for nationals of developing countries in the United Nations system, in particular at the higher and senior levels. The goal of attaining an equitably gender balance in the staffing of the Secretariat is also yet to be attained.

The financial resources provided to the Secretary-General also need to be commensurate with the mandates given to him by the Member States. We strongly urge Member States to ensure that the Organization is provided with the resources it requires to carry out its mandates.

We agree that the Secretary-General must be granted the adequate flexibility he requires to manage the resources at his disposal, provided there are clearly defined checks and balances to guarantee that the Secretary-General and his staff utilize those resources in a prudent manner and remain accountable to the intergovernmental machinery for their actions.

A better resources management policy should be based on a clear division of functions between the intergovernmental machinery and the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me assure the Secretary-General of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Botswana in his commitment to improving and strengthening the ability of the United Nations to effectively and efficiently fulfil its mandate.

We also pledge our unqualified support to the Deputy Secretary-General, as she guides us through the reform process.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of Iraq to the United Nations, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the report before us today entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change". The report clearly outlines the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his team to make the United Nations system better able to face the challenges of this century.

The question that arises today is, why reform? Is it because the United Nations has become incapable of fulfilling its commitments and has failed to address the challenges threatening our world? Or is it that reform is merely an exercise in cosmetic change that gives the appearance of our interest in international relations and in keeping abreast of them? Before answering those two legitimate questions, one must admit that the ongoing United Nations reform process underscores a very important issue: our firm belief in this Organization, to which we all belong, and our commitment to its Charter. Those two components constitute the cornerstone of a world built on peace, justice and equity. That is indeed our hope and the thrust of our common interests. We look forward, as we have yesterday and will tomorrow, to a new century of peace and stability, in which human values and a civilized code of conduct prevail.

The past century experienced devastating wars, turbulence and internal conflict. Following that, we had high hopes for peace, stability and compassion. But terrorism, hegemony, colonialism in its old and new forms, and threats to conquer nations and to change their systems of governments shattered many of our hopes across the world. Forces of darkness have re-emerged to impede the progress of the United Nations in this century. We should not allow these forces to prevail. Indeed, we should continue to struggle strenuously and defiantly to overcome current and future difficulties. This is an inherent right and goal set out in the Charter of the Organization.

The message of reform is addressed to all countries of the world. Its essence, simply put, is that the principles and values upon which the world Organization was established and the goals that we have set ourselves require the common and constant efforts of all. It requires a pause to analyse the difficulties, crises and problems that have impeded the fulfilment of the obligations that the United Nations system has undertaken. In order to embark on a serious discussion on this important question, it is essential to address the current obstacles and difficulties.

As has been frequently said, we all belong to a global village. Nevertheless, we still lack the collective perception of humankind as one single community, simply because certain wealthy, powerful and influential States in the world today continue to place their narrow national interests above the common good of all humankind. Moreover, international relations are driven today by considerations of power rather than anchored in the high values and principles under which this Organization, to which we all belong, was established.

The General Assembly — over which you, Sir, are presiding this year — is the only organ in which any State Member of the United Nations can participate in discussing any issue before it. Indeed, the Assembly is more open and more transparent than any other organ and should be kept that way. However, the resolutions of this Assembly do not enjoy adequate enforcement power. We must therefore consider how to enforce the resolutions of the General Assembly, most of which remain dead letter. Moreover, we must stress the importance of General Assembly participation in discussing the political issues on the agenda of the Security Council.

The Security Council reform process cannot continue ad infinitum. Council reform should be undertaken on the basis of the principle of equal sovereignty among States and the Council should be more democratic, transparent and accountable. The General Assembly, for its part, must have a role in correcting the erroneous courses of action which the Council occasionally takes. We believe that the expansion of the Council's membership must reflect the increased membership of the Organization in order to ensure that the Council becomes more democratic, representative and open.

With respect to the Economic and Social Council, we believe that there is a need to strengthen its Committees, and especially its economic and development commissions, in view of the current grave world economic situation. We therefore welcome the proposed coordination among the United Nations organs not only in those fields, but in all areas.

The available resources must be commensurate with the proposed tasks in order to enhance the mandates of the United Nations system. The Organization must receive all financial contributions on time. Despite the scarcity of financial resources — a topic that is frequently discussed in this Hall — it is very strange that Iraq should have been prevented from making its financial contributions to the United Nations over the past 12 years. These contributions would be drawn from revenue accruing under the Memorandum of Understanding on the oil for food programme and derive 100 per cent from Iraqi sources. Why does the United Nations not accept these cumulative arrears from Iraqi United Nations funds, despite the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars are available? My delegation knows as well as you do, Sir, that there is a political objective behind this stand that does not do justice to the United Nations. It is the intention to deny Iraq its legitimate right to play an effective role in the work of the Organization. As all know, Iraq was a founding Member of the United Nations.

In the area of human rights, we must never forget that the world has many cultures. We believe that the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to development, is the foundation of peace and security and a principal factor in preventing conflict. We also believe that efforts must be made to respect human rights. This requires an integrated approach and the immutable linkage of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. However, efforts to implement and consolidate civil and political rights to the detriment of others are bound to cause friction and clashes. In order to promote respect for human rights, the General Assembly is invited to consider the catastrophic impact on the enjoyment of all human rights of economic sanctions that have been and shall be imposed on nations in the name of this Organization or by some powerful States unilaterally.

The Secretary-General has devoted part of his report to the question of the maintenance of international peace and security and the protection of civilians in times of armed conflict. At this juncture, we would recall the grave deterioration in the living conditions of the Iraqi people under the war that has been tirelessly waged against Iraq for 12 years by the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Those two States have continuously striven to maintain the state of siege and warfare against my country. We are all very familiar with the recent threats of war against my country made by the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

I should also like in this regard to recall the conditions of the unarmed Palestinian people in the face of Israeli practices that are in total contravention of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. The time has indeed come for the international community to ensure respect by those States for the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The United Nations must have a larger role in this serious and important sphere, away from the narrow interests of some major, influential Member States of the United Nations.

Crucial factors that would prevent armed conflict include the maintenance of international peace and security, upholding the rule of law, implementation of development goals, eradication of poverty, promotion of human rights and democracy and combating terrorism. These factors must be included in the development of a strategy to prevent armed conflict which examines both the root causes of conflict and ways to address those causes.

The current international conditions under which we live today remind us of the fact that the United Nations remains relevant and indispensable, although reform is necessary for some of its structures. This is a noble mission and my Government stands ready to participate effectively in this reform process in order to build a better future for future generations during the current millennium.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to make an announcement concerning additions to the programme of work of the plenary of the General Assembly for Monday 4 November 2002. In the morning, the General Assembly will consider as the first item, agenda item 16, election of 20 members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 52.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.42

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

42nd plenary meeting
Friday, 1 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 52 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387 and Corr.1)

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. My delegation would like to join previous speakers in commending the Secretary-General for initiating the new reform proposals contained in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

The report under consideration today is comprehensive and very timely and is aimed at implementing the goals of the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major international conferences, including the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

My delegation shares the view expressed by other delegations that the document represents a milestone on the road towards further improvements in the activities of both the General Assembly and the Secretariat. We believe that reform should be a continuing process, since there are still many areas in the United Nations which need to be rationalized. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Organization into a more effective and flexible instrument in order to enable it to respond to the wide range of new global challenges.

My Government fully supports the strong commitment of the Secretary-General further to strengthen the United Nations. Under his leadership, the Organization has undergone numerous changes in recent years and significantly improved its performance.

There is no doubt that the full implementation of the second phase of the reform proposed by the Secretary-General will require constructive support on the part of the Member States. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to enhance the transparency of the process, in which all interested delegations will be involved.

My delegation deems this approach to be the most appropriate one, as the report of the Secretary-General merits comprehensive deliberations which, we believe, will result in the adoption of a resolution endorsed by all Member States.

My delegation also commends the intention of the President of the General Assembly to prepare a paper that will provide explanations with respect to the major issues which have been raised by regional groups and Member States. This measure will undoubtedly accommodate the concerns of delegations and stimulate the negotiation process.

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the activities of the Organization in the economic and social fields. We agree with the Secretary-General that

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the United Nations should expand its presence in the developing world by improving its effectiveness and its responsiveness.

We believe that the reform measures must enable the United Nations fully to implement all mandated programmes which strengthen the capacities of the developing countries to address the challenges of a globalized economy.

We welcome the idea of improving the planning and budgetary processes of the Organization. My delegation supports those delegations which think that the budget cycle needs to be modernized in order better to serve a renewed Organization. Indeed, a more balanced, transparent and strategic document must be elaborated that reflects our priorities and consequent resource requirements.

It goes without saying that further improvement of United Nations activities in the field of information is an integral part of the whole reform package. The role of the Department of Public Information must not be underestimated, since the United Nations is repositioning itself with a view to acquiring even greater relevance as an indispensable global institution. We believe also that the activities of the United Nations Information Centres deserve serious consideration.

We acknowledge the need to strengthen the activities of the General Assembly. We believe that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management must play a more active role in managing documentation and meetings.

We support also the continuing improvement of human resources management. We attach particular importance to the implementation of the principle of equitable geographic distribution with regard to Secretariat staff.

We wish to see a reformed Security Council that is open to dialogue and sends the international community a clear message that it stands ready to meet new challenges. We hope that the President of the General Assembly will bring the negotiation process back to life in order to reach a comprehensive package agreement on Council reform.

We welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

In conclusion, allow me to assure the Assembly of our full support for the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of the Organization in the twenty-first century and of the full cooperation of my delegation in the promotion of further deliberations.

Mrs. Hughes Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): My delegation, while aligning itself fully with the statement made by Ambassador Vicente Vallenilla on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, considers it appropriate to make some brief comments on the specific and particular problems of the smallest States Members of the United Nations. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines undoubtedly falls into this category.

My Government is firm in its view that, notwithstanding our smallness and relative poverty, it is vital to our national interests that we maintain a presence at this forum, although the cost of establishing and maintaining a Mission in New York puts a great strain on an already overburdened economy. For this reason, it is critical that the representatives here in New York serve their country well. However, I will try to pinpoint one or two reasons why it is so very difficult for mini-States to play the kind of role to which we aspire.

First of all, it is quite obvious that the architects of the United Nations agenda were representatives of States that were not constrained by lack of resources, either financial or, more importantly, human. How otherwise could we explain why the vast bulk of the United Nations agenda is crammed into a few short weeks between September and December each year? During these weeks, all of the main committees are meeting, very often simultaneously. There are also numerous meetings of the plenary, as well as a multitude of other events, seminars, briefings, meetings of regional groups, and so on, which are an integral part of the functioning of the Organization. Add to this nightmarish scenario the vast mountain of official — and unofficial — documentation that has to be tackled on a daily basis, and one can easily see that a dozen or more bodies would be needed for a delegation to function in even a modest way.

For a Mission with what can only be described as a skeleton staff, it is quite impossible to contribute to the workings of the United Nations in the way that we would like, given that, try as we might, we have not

found a way to be in two places at once, far less three or more.

It may be impertinent of me to even think such scandalous thoughts, but I make bold to ask if it would not be possible to rethink the United Nations agenda with a view to spreading the work more evenly throughout the calendar year.

The other issue I wish to address is that of candidatures to the various United Nations bodies or organs. I wish to put forward the opinion that it is high time that the United Nations devised a system of equitable and automatic representation, on a rotating basis, for its Member States on its principal organs. Not only would this ensure equity, democracy and fairness in the system, but it would, at a stroke, remove the need for our endless processions to and from the Indonesian Lounge. This would not only free up prodigious amounts of time for hard-working delegations, but would also result in significant savings for Member States due to not having to campaign. I would like to suggest that these savings could be deposited in a special fund to assist the world's poor.

In closing, I quote from paragraph 23 of the Secretary-General's report:

> "The proliferation of meetings and official documents places excessive demands on both the Secretariat and Member States. Many smaller Member States now find it practically impossible to play a meaningful role in even the most crucial activities of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council".

I cannot say it any better than the Secretary-General did, and, on that note, I rest my case.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru)(*spoke in Spanish*): In a recent article on the future of the United Nations in the new millennium, the Deputy Secretary-General rightly maintained that the Organization faces three main challenges: the challenge of legitimacy, which implies that international organizations should be more transparent, participatory and democratic when it comes to taking decisions; the challenge of consistency, which requires programme adjustments and better inter-agency coordination, as well as a greater political willingness on the part of its Member States to provide resources and authority that the United Nations requires to comply with its objectives; and, finally, the challenge of effectiveness, measured in terms of available instruments and the effective implementation of internationally agreed commitments at the national level. The delegation of Peru fully shares this vision and feels that these three principles, along with transparency and accountability, are the basis on which the Organization should rest.

It is in this context that we welcome and congratulate the Secretary-General for the reform programme that he is submitting to us. This must be an undertaking by all of us. The Organization is at the service of member countries, and member countries must offer its Secretariat the means and instruments that make it possible to comply with these objectives, which are none other than those defined and approved by the members themselves. There can be no other agenda.

These reforms, as correctly pointed out by the Secretary-General, must be accompanied by changes in intergovernmental bodies, and for this reason, it is urgent to streamline and prioritize the work of the General Assembly, strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council in the area of development, resolve economic and social international problems and proceed immediately to the democratization of the Security Council.

Peru agrees with the Secretary-General on the need to adjust the Organization's budget and programme instruments to the priorities that we have set for ourselves. It is crucial for the delegation of Peru that the United Nations system programme of activities be focused on the eradication of global poverty, and this requires that the developing countries achieve high-end sustained economic growth. It is also fundamental to fully implement the Millennium Declaration, as well as the Monterrey consensus and the outcome of the Johannesburg summit.

We support the ideas of the Secretary-General to emphasize questions that are not receiving proper attention, such as globalization and its positive and negative consequences for development, migration, water shortages and conflict prevention, among other things.

But we also believe there are other serious problems that should be studied with greater emphasis. Besides financial vulnerability and the recurrence of natural disasters as a result of climate change, Peru is particularly concerned by persistent unemployment in developing countries and the growing social

requirements that compromise democratic viability. We have to find creative formulas in order to strengthen democracy and governance.

We commend the Secretary-General for his proposal to present a revised programme budget in 2003, with the desire to provide an efficient instrument for the Organization to comply with its task. The delegation of Peru feels that it is important to grant the Secretary-General greater autonomy in the administration of resources. This greater flexibility could be accompanied by criteria for certain priority programme lines for developing countries which should not fall below the established limit.

The arguments that the duties of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) go to the Fifth Committee seem to be quite sound. This would give a greater consistency between strategic and programme planning, as well as budget allocation. If this proposal is approved after a more exhaustive assessment, we suggest that financial support continue so that experts from capitals of developing countries can take part in the debates of the Fifth Committee.

Peru is fully committed to democracy, good governance and the protection and promotion of human rights. As a result, we support the efforts designed to strengthen and perfect the United Nations human rights machinery and effective compliance with international commitments undertaken by Member States. As a result, we are awaiting an occasion to become familiar with and to express ourselves on the different reports and recommendations requested by the Secretary-General to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in actions 2 to 5.

Since it is not possible to dwell on all the proposals here, the delegation of Peru would simply like to record its support for the strengthening of the United Nations relationship with civil society and the private sector, for the need to improve the Organization's human resources policies, the strategic redefinition of the Department of Public Information and the enhancement of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Peru believes that it is of utmost importance to strengthen technical cooperation for developing countries. However, we are not very clear on what is being proposed in this area. It is important, of course, to establish a division of responsibilities and duties. But it is also important to have alternative approaches, instruments and sources of financing and technical cooperation to meet the needs of the countries that are on the receiving end.

I would like to conclude with two items. First of all, it seems certain that there has been some fatigue when it comes to holding major conferences. This, however, should not prevent periodic reviews of the implementation of commitments undertaken; nor should it deny the opportunity of calling upon the political will of Member States or the conscience of public opinion. We can imagine, for example, that, earlier than we might expect, we may feel the need to convene a world summit on global governance, including the question of global public good.

Secondly, we feel that it is important to have a more fluid and ongoing interaction between the various strata of Secretariat staff with Member States on the activities and work plans that are being carried out in the concrete implementation of the budget, as well as the medium-term plan. This is not a question of transparency, nor is it one of scrutiny. We do believe that this exists. Rather, it is a matter of achieving more fluid communication, as well as human contact. For example, for any representative who would like to become informed about certain facts, activities or to exchange points of view, all he or she can do is to read the reports, attend occasional panels or request interviews.

For this reason, the delegation of Peru feels that, as is common practice for any corporate management, it would be highly positive to have periodic informal meetings with the Under-Secretaries-General, heads of department and their teams on the different activities that are being carried out or being planned, as well as an exchange of points of view on questions of particular interest. These meetings could be held with the regional groups or other groups, such as the Rio Group. This would strengthen the feeling of belonging and partnership with the purpose that unites us all, that is, to achieve legitimacy, consistency and effectiveness for the Organization.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Ecuador, I am pleased to congratulate and thank the Secretary-General for the report on strengthening of the United Nations (document A/57/387) and to express our firm and decisive support for the proposals contained therein. This valuable document reflects the need to

carry out thorough reforms within the Organization in order to ensure that its work is effective and efficient, which would make it possible to comply with the objectives pointed out in the United Nations Charter, as well as the goals that have been set by member countries in recent world summits.

There have been changes. However, much still remains to be done. In order to take positive and fruitful steps towards the accomplishment of this objective, the Organization must respond to current demands, as well as to the new realities, of a world that offers enormous challenges and, at the same time, great opportunities.

In order to achieve one of the basic objectives of the Organization — a better world, more just, equitable and supportive — it is necessary to have the political will for establishing a solid foundation to enable leadership of the international community.

The Millennium Declaration is a framework for future action of the United Nations. The heads of State or Government of the Member countries expressed their commitment to making the Organization a more effective instrument in achieving the priority themes, such as the struggle for the development of all peoples in the world; the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice; fight against violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our planet.

The Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg are important steps that have been taken in the past year and that establish very explicit and agreed upon lines of action to fulfill the goals that we have expressed.

In order to make substantive progress towards these objectives, we must immediately tackle the task of implementing the agreements that emerged from these summits. It is necessary to transcend mere words or reiteration of commitment and move towards the search for and implementation of innovative, viable and effective mechanisms that will lead us towards the objective we are all pursuing — that is, international peace and security.

We firmly believe that only development, in its broadest sense, would make it possible to move towards solid and lasting peace and international security. Social justice, respect for human rights and better opportunities for work and production for people in the developing world constitute the basis of a true guarantee of international security.

With the passing of time and increase in the number of its tasks, the General Assembly has stopped being the scene of major debates and a forum where we meet and willingly seek solutions to the challenges that history presents us with. Faced with this reality, it becomes clear that there is a need to reaffirm the primary function of the General Assembly, the main deliberative body that adopts policies and represents the United Nations, and where all States, without exception, take part democratically in deliberations.

For these reasons, it is certain that we need a renewed and strengthened multilateral system that would lay down the solid groundwork for effective international cooperation, based on common principles and norms, taking into consideration the requirements of the day.

The promotion and protection of human rights is of great importance for my country. In this respect, we feel it is particularly important to stress the proposal designed to improve different aspects of the relationship of Governments with the United Nations system. We greatly value the proposals that aim to strengthen the United Nations capacity to assist countries with the establishment of solid human-rights institutions.

We share the idea that public opinion is fundamental to strengthening the United Nations, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report. As a result, we believe that the proposals to redefine the duties of the Department of Public Information are also important.

Mr. President, the delegation of Ecuador would like to congratulate you on your current efforts to promote new stages in the reform process of the General Assembly, and we support them firmly. We also express our willingness to cooperate with the process that will lead to the revitalization of the Organization and make it possible to comply with the vision of men and women of this planet who would like to change the realities that affect our world.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to thank you for organizing such a timely debate on this agenda item, which is a matter of keen interest to all Member States, as well as for your

initiative in launching the process of informal consultations on further reform of our Organization, with the active and much appreciated participation of our Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Frechette.

My delegation has studied with particular interest the Secretary General's report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" which, without setting new priorities, brings to the fore some areas where we should focus our reform efforts in the coming months. This reform process began in 1997, and we continue to have full confidence in the capacity of the Secretary-General to direct and administer such a comprehensive reform. It is in this spirit that we share his vision on ways and means to arrive at a stronger United Nations, one better adapted and more responsive to the demands made by an era of globalization and unconventional challenges and threats.

In this respect, we agree that the main pillars of the United Nations system should be subject to a careful reform, based on the priorities and targets we set together in the Millennium Declaration. Thus, both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council need to adapt in order to realize their potential, and the process of Security Council reform needs new political impetus.

Turning to some more specific issues on the agenda for further change, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Denmark and has several short comments and recommendations.

As the Secretary-General suggests in his report, the increasing role of the United Nations in dealing with globally important social and economic issues calls for a corresponding strengthening of the role played by the principal organ concerned — namely, the Economic and Social Council — which could become, in our view, the preeminent global forum for shaping development policies and strategies. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation about clarifying the General Assembly's responsibilities vis-à-vis those of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, in particular in relation to follow-up to the major conferences, in a way that will enable the Assembly to add value to the work of these bodies.

My delegation considers as necessary a comprehensive reorganization of the Department of Public Information, including a clear definition of its role within the United Nations system and a more coherent attribution of its responsibilities. We appreciate that, through its repositioning, the Department of Public Information will be able to develop more strategic activities and become a more effective tool in promoting a general picture of United Nations specific activities for the benefit of international public opinion. We are looking forward with great interest to hearing from the Secretary-General in his next report his specific proposals regarding the comprehensive review of the Department of Public Information's management system and activities, and we indicate our openness to a constructive dialogue with other delegations in this respect during the next session of the Committee on Information.

Regarding the United Nations information centres, Romania hosts such a Centre in Bucharest. The Centre is integrated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field office. Romania supports the functioning of such centres in close cooperation with the system of the Resident Coordinator. On the subject of regional centres, we support the rationale for and the proposed substantive approach of all such centres' activities, while respecting the principle of the need for preliminary agreement on the part of the host country targeted for the establishment and functioning of possible regional centres. We await with interest the Secretariat's recommendations that are to be included in the additional report with a comprehensive review of the activities of the information centres drafted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

My delegation appreciates the fact that upgrading and improving the efficiency of the working methods of United Nations libraries is a necessary element of reform intended to, among other things, improve the current electronic access to the United Nations documents. We are convinced that a thorough examination of the different categories of publications issued by the Secretariat is much needed. That review should aim at reducing the number of publications while ensuring higher quality of content. We note that two additional reports are expected, one on the review of the United Nations system of libraries and the other on United Nations documents and publications. We believe that a future debate on these issues will be beneficial.

Romania supports the proposals put forward in the Secretary-General's report regarding the strengthening of the Organization's capability to promote and protect human rights. We particularly welcome the proposals aimed at consolidating the potential of the United Nations to assist Member States to develop stronger national institutions in the field of human rights. We believe that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights may play a crucial role in this respect.

In recent years, the interaction between the United Nations system and civil society organizations has reached unprecedented levels. More than 2,000 non-governmental organizations (NGO) currently enjoy consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, while thousands of such organizations have taken part in the various global events organized during the last decade under the aegis of the United Nations in the political and economic fields, as well as in global events dedicated to human rights topics. The Millennium Declaration enshrines the commitment of Member States to develop the potential offered by cooperation between the United Nations, civil society and the private sector. Nevertheless, we believe that increased coherence in the procedures for the accreditation and participation of NGOs in United Nations activities is yet to be found.

As we urged during the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, my delegation favours a clear designation of the responsibilities conferred upon the two Secretariat departments playing a key role in maintaining peace and international security, namely the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. That should be done while ensuring improved cooperation between the two Departments. It is our understanding that the basic role of the Department of Political Affairs lies in the fields of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and peace-building. That Department therefore has responsibility for United Nations political and peace-building offices in the field, while the Department of Peacekeeping Operations coordinates the planning and management of all peace and security operations across the world. In that context, we reiterate the integrative and coordinating role to be played by the Executive Committee on Peace and Security in accordance with the Brahimi report.

With regard to the budgetary and financial implications of the reform package put forward by the Secretary-General, we take as a starting point the fact that the assumptions of our work are spelled out by the Millennium Declaration. In order to efficiently follow up on the priorities contained in the report, a flexible system for the allocation of adequate resources needs to be considered. While the underlying pattern of the budgetary process may have to be changed over time, a comprehensive review of the planning and budgeting cycle to align it with a results-based approach is nevertheless timely and welcome. An accountable planning and budgeting process should be responsive to the dynamic environment in which the Secretariat operates, not least in serving to simplify and improve procedures. For their part, it is imperative that Member States agree to ensure more streamlined and strengthened intergovernmental processes.

The Millennium Declaration could not be better supported than by improving the Organization's human, physical and information technology infrastructures. Enhanced programme delivery could result through investing in human resources management and swift implementation of the capital master plan.

In conclusion, I would like to express Romania's full support for the general vision embodied in the Secretary-General's report. In our opinion, that report requires a prompt, positive and integrated response on our part. We should also recognize that some recommendations and details are still subject to clarification and further agreement among Member States.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): Speaking so late in this debate, in which many delegations have already engaged in an exhaustive examination of the 36 six actions recommended by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), it is the desire of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago to draw to the attention of the Assembly some aspects of that report that it considers to be fundamental if small delegations such as my own are to be able to participate effectively and efficiently in the work of the annual sessions of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General observes in his report that it is

> "crucially important that the Assembly continue its own reform efforts to further rationalize its agenda." (*A/57/387, para. 16*)

In that regard, he also notes that

> "Great improvements are possible, however, if duplicative items can be combined, and closely related issues clustered into a single discussion, leading to outcomes of greater policy relevance and impact." (*ibid*)

My delegation has noted that some measures in that regard have already been put in motion. We welcome that development, but believe that further action is necessary in that respect.

The Secretary-General also points out that

> "The pattern of recurring agenda items should also be rigorously reviewed, with many issues addressed biennially, or at even longer intervals." (*ibid*)

That approach to the rationalization of the agenda is one to which the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago can subscribe fully, as it would give member Governments a more adequate time frame within which to implement at the national level commitments undertaken at the international level. Additionally, it would afford the Secretariat the opportunity to optimally rationalize its use of resources in carrying out the many actions called for in all of our resolutions. Such an approach would also enable the United Nations to revisit a subject area after a number of years to determine what substantive developments have in fact taken place within that period at the global level. Of course, the issues to be so treated should be identified through a process designed on the basis of transparent, clearly defined and agreed criteria.

A related aspect of this issue is that, while it is a customary practice at almost every annual session of the United Nations General Assembly to allow States the opportunity to request the inclusion of additional agenda items, there is not a corresponding tendency on the part of States to remove any items from the Assembly's agenda. It is the view of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago that a proactive General Committee, given its broad and representative nature, can effectively discharge the mandate of determining the periodicity with which agenda items are considered and/or the possibility of their deletion from the agenda.

The Secretary-General has also referred in his report to the overwhelming number of meetings. According to his report, over the biennium 2000-2001 a staggering 15,484 meetings were held and 5,879 reports were issued. The proliferation of meetings and official documents, in his view, places excessive demands on both the Secretariat and Member States, and his report goes on to state quite categorically that "Many smaller Member States now find it practically impossible to play a meaningful role in even the most crucial activities of the General Assembly" (*para. 23*). As a result of those pressures, the report indicates that there is now a palpable need to curtail the volume of official meetings and documents.

The situation is exacerbated further, as noted in the report, due to the fact that at present the "reports are overwhelming in number, tend towards duplication and are fragmented in their impact" (*para. 87*). More than 500 reports, it is stated, were submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, and the Secretary-General returns to an all too familiar theme when noting that Member States, especially the smaller countries, find it difficult to cope with the mountains of paper that need to be absorbed and acted upon. The Secretariat itself, the report continues, is struggling to keep abreast of the growing number of reports requested by the various inter-governmental bodies and the sheer volume of the demands is "drowning its ability to provide focused and value-added analysis" (*para. 88*).

The Secretary-General's overall analysis of this situation, which also highlights the frequency of reporting and the fact that requests for reports to be produced periodically stay on the books long after they have become obsolete, leads to his action 11, which calls for consolidating reports on related subjects and for the General Assembly to establish a mechanism to review the continuing need for and frequency of recurring reporting requirements. The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago supports the Secretary-General's call for such a mechanism and is of the opinion that the respective bureaux of the Main Committees, together with the prime movers of individual draft resolutions, can play an effective role in that regard.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, as a small delegation of a small United Nations Member State, is of the view that action in those two areas would be extremely beneficial to the work of the United Nations and would lead to more effective

participation by Member States, large and small, in the annual deliberations of the General Assembly.

My delegation has not found it opportune at this time to examine every action recommended in the report, but wishes to draw to the Assembly's attention that the initiatives in the report reflect the ideas and suggestions of every part of the Secretariat and the consultations held with all of the funds and programmes of the Organization. The observation was also made by the Deputy Secretary-General during the informal briefing that the Committee on Conferences is supportive of the actions recommended in respect of its area of competence and that the chapter on human resources has been discussed with staff representatives.

The Secretary-General has himself restated in his introduction of the report that the whole package hangs together as a coherent whole, and he has asked us to treat it as such. The Secretary-General has done his work, and it is now up to the Assembly to give him a clear and positive legislative mandate for him to proceed to implement the further reforms that he, as the chief administrative officer, has identified that the system is in need of in the short, medium and long term if we are to make the United Nations a more effective instrument in the service of mankind.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago is prepared to work with you, Mr. President, and with other interested delegations in any open-ended informal consultations to discuss in depth the actions recommended in the report and to prepare the necessary omnibus draft resolution, which we are sure would be adopted without a vote by this Assembly in the time frame you have indicated.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/387). Having read the entire report, we believe that the Secretariat has the enthusiasm and the vision to pursue the necessary reforms that began five years ago.

The vitality of the debate and the broad participation in it reflect the importance that Member States attach to the issue of the desired reforms, which in turn reflects an increasing recognition of the magnitude of the challenges we face today and our collective conviction regarding the role of the United Nations as a centre for international decision-making and for realizing the collective will. The Millennium Declaration not only defines the goals and the direction of our future work, but also identifies an effective role for the Organization now and in the future.

It is well known that our noble objective is the maintenance of international peace and security. It is also common knowledge that peace will not prevail unless it is based on justice and equity, be it in the areas of security and sovereignty or in that of the distribution of resources and well-being.

The delegation of Yemen has spoken already on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/57/1). We support the further measures the Secretary-General has proposed in the report (A/57/387) before us today. We cannot now go into detail on all the proposals contained in the report, but we would like to state that the nature of the challenges we face and the interrelation among our shared interests in this era of globalization make it imperative to strengthen the role and effectiveness of the United Nations as an institution for multilateral international endeavour. At the same time, we consider attempts to form alliances outside the context of this Organization to contravene the Millennium Declaration and the objective of achieving democracy in international relations.

We wish to address in particular issues related to the General Assembly and the Security Council. Reform means correcting the mistakes of the past. We agree with the Secretary-General's report that the role of the General Assembly in the work of the United Nations is diminishing. That is a shortcoming that must be corrected. For our part, we support all efforts to revitalize the General Assembly and, Mr. President, we hail your personal efforts. We also consider that the expansion of the membership of the Security Council is an issue upon which we all agree. It is one of the most important reforms that must be carried out.

We wish to emphasize what the representative of Venezuela said on behalf of the Group of 77 and China: that reform of the Organization should target, first and foremost, the development needs of developing nations. This makes it imperative that the activities of the components of the Organization, including the Department of Public Information, be directed to that end. Here, we must emphasize the need to strengthen United Nations information centres in developing nations, because those nations lack information technology and modern media. Among the areas that

need that support are the Arab countries, where intensive information activities are needed to correct the image of the United Nations within Arab public opinion and explain its role in working for the benefit of one and all. We still believe that the United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a can perform that task if it is strengthened and supported.

There is no doubt that the United Nations needs new blood and new ideas that will open opportunities to the young people of the developing countries and enable them to assume positions in the international civil service. This will contribute to the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the United Nations employment policies, which have yet to be implemented, and to attain the required universality.

We wish to assure you, Sir, that the delegation of the Republic of Yemen remains ready to participate in all consultations on any views and proposals that will help to strengthen our Organization and enable it to perform its role in guiding and forming international relations, in consonance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

Mr. Nakkari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for submitting the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". We appreciate his interest in strengthening the work of the Organization in response to the priorities enshrined in the Millennium Declaration.

We share the Secretary-General's view that there is a need for a multilateral institution devoted to the service of humankind as a whole. That need has never been more urgent than it is in this age of globalization. Needless to say, keeping our methods of work under constant review is essential so that we may benefit from experience, allowing us to correct past mistakes and to enhance the methods used to implement the goals of the United Nations. The reform of the Security Council and the strengthening of the role of the General Assembly fall into this same context.

The report is of special importance, addressing as it does the strengthening of the United Nations as a whole. It is an ambitious programme that allows us to hope that we will be able to strengthen and improve the Organization's mechanisms of work with a view to its implementation of the letter and spirit of the Charter and to its ability to respond to the challenges outlined in the Millennium Declaration and to apply the relevant legislative mandates in all its tasks.

There is no doubt that this great ambition requires the revitalization of the process of Security Council reform in order to make it more democratic. It further requires the establishment of new frameworks in the relationship between the United Nations and its specialized agencies, bodies, organizations, programmes and funds, as well as the strengthening of the central role of the General Assembly. It requires effective mechanisms for implementation that would enable the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, among other United Nations bodies, to follow up on the implementation of their recommendations.

In the light of all this, my delegation wishes to offer brief comments on the report before us, since the report addresses a number of important issues and makes a number of proposals that the General Assembly should consider and engage with. The report is rich in information and the issues it tackles are diverse. It raises a number of questions to which the representative of Venezuela referred in his statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It would be useful to us to know what is required of the General Assembly in the light of the points raised in the report, some of which require the Secretary-General's approval or fall under his competence, while others are in the purview of the General Assembly. Informal consultations will undoubtedly help to clarify for delegations those questions that were raised during the debate on the report, including those raised by the Group of 77 and China.

It can be said that the necessary measures are confined to issues which the Main Committees of the General Assembly are accustomed to addressing. The discussion of most of these issues is generally carried out in the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. A number of other proposed steps relate to the work of the Second, Third and Fourth Committees. It would seem useful to us in this context to seek to benefit from the accrued expertise and experience of those Committees. It would also be meaningful to build on prior achievements with a view to strengthening the current legislative mandates.

My delegation would like to make a number of general observations on some points raised in the report.

First, with respect to the promotion of the Department of Public Information, the report highlights the ambitious goals of that Department to reach the largest possible global audience. We stress the necessity of achieving parity on the Internet among the six official languages of the Organization. This would allow us to achieve the goal of reaching the broadest possible audience and enable the Organization to spread its message, in implementation of many United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, with respect to publications and the work of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management, my delegation believes that the management of meetings is an entitlement of the Member States and not of the Secretariat. We emphasize the need for the publications and documentation of the United Nations to reach the Member States in the six official languages. They must be distributed simultaneously and in a timely manner, in accordance with current legislative mandates. I note the leading role played by the Department in preserving the institutional memory of the Organization and in disseminating hard-copy reports in the six official languages of the Organization. This allows delegations, particularly the smaller ones, to engage with the Secretary-General's proposals and to interact with the intergovernmental bodies, since most such reports are the bases of negotiations between delegations.

Thirdly, my delegation believes that the establishment of an additional position of Assistant Secretary-General to support policy coherence and management in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is worthy of our support.

Fourthly, the medium-term plan is the framework that allows us to examine the Organization's policies and their implementation. A four-year time frame would be more effective for coordinating those policies. A detailed, transparent budget would help to ensure that funding of the programmes is in line with legislative policies and mandates. My delegation would like to stress the important role played by the Committee for Programme Coordination in examining the policies of the Organization and in ensuring coordination and funding of legislative mandates.

Allow me to indicate that the sunset provisions mentioned in paragraph 44 of the report — which states the need to examine initiatives with major financial implications and to apply sunset provisions to them — make us wonder whether or not the eradication of poverty is one of the Organization's main priorities. The Organization's survival depends on the achievement of its goals, and one of its main goals is eradication of poverty. Revitalization of the General Assembly hinges upon that concept.

Fifthly, as to human resources management, my delegation believes that the United Nations staff is the Organization's most valuable asset. We emphasize the need to benefit from what has been achieved in reforming the management of human resources, and to take into account the points of view of the staff in that matter. The Secretary-General is right that the principles and the system of internal justice must be strengthened. We must close the loophole created by suppression of the role of the International Court of Justice as an appeals court for the United Nations staff. It is vital to close that loophole. Increased scope for delegation of authority makes it necessary to strengthen accountability.

In conclusion, we believe the important issues raised by the Secretary-General in his report require constructive interaction through broadened examination and in-depth reflection, and will benefit from the invaluable clarifications which the Secretariat will provide us during our informal consultations on the item.

Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas (Bolivia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: The item we are discussing today is extremely important. The strengthening of the United Nations should be a constant element in the concern, the action and the responsibility of the international community and, in particular, of every Member State, large or small, represented in this great Assembly.

The United Nations is the premier world forum for the discussion of major problems affecting mankind as a whole as well as individuals. The complex and delicate questions of international peace and security; the liberation of peoples and nations; the creation and formation of new States in the process of decolonization; the efforts to improve the social and economic situation of millions of human beings; the promotion of human rights; development; the

protection of the environment: all these have for some time been on the political agenda of the Organization.

Each year, the Assembly conducts an assessment of the work of the Organization through the report of the Secretary-General (see A/57/1). The outcome of that assessment has been mixed, as we saw in the recent debate on that item. Although this assessment is partial, fragmented and subjective, we have seen positive and concrete progress in the work of the Organization, in the areas such as peacekeeping operations — which earned the Nobel Peace Prize; the establishment of the State of Timor-Leste under the auspices of the United Nations and its accession to membership of the Organization; the holding of the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits. These are clear examples of achievements of the Organization that we can mention as sources of great satisfaction.

However, there are also reasons to be somewhat dissatisfied. We need only mention the problems of underdevelopment.

In terms of time, we have entered a new century and a new millennium. In terms of space, we have entered the era of globalization. We have a new context, where the old unresolved problems have worsened and taken on a global dimension, becoming at the same time formidable new challenges.

The sustainability and strengthening of democracies; respect for international law; the promotion, respect and full observance of human, political, economic and cultural rights: these are crucial for better peaceful coexistence. We see extreme poverty at the global level; it is no longer acceptable to the international community. Enormous inequalities in access to the benefits of economic, trade, financial and technological activities have also increased and have worsened both nationally and internationally, bordering on the unacceptable. The deterioration of every aspect of our environment is intolerable.

If that were not enough, in this process of globalization we have seen the emergence of new threats: international crime, terrorism, the illicit trafficking of arms and drugs, and the rise of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. Technological advances, paradoxically, have opened a new and wider gap between those who possess information and knowledge and the dispossessed. Combined with all of this, we have changes and crises in the economies of developing countries as a result of globalization, which in many cases has threatened to further widen already existing social inequalities.

The current situation of the world in which we live and its prospects for the future are not at all promising. On the contrary, we can say they are uncertain and dramatic. Allow me to mention three specific examples. With regard to the lack of food and security, according to the latest statistics of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 840 million people in the world are malnourished. This means that 11 million people in industrialized countries, 30 million in the countries in transition and 799 million in developing countries suffer chronic hunger. Of these, 6 million children under the age of five die each year.

Another example with respect to health, the September-October 2002 edition of "Population 2005", quotes a United Nations report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic as saying that over the next 20 years, 70 million people will die of AIDS. As a third example, on the distribution of wealth in the world, 14 per cent of the world population, concentrated in the developed countries, produce and consume 75 per cent of the world product, while the remaining 86 per cent are responsible for the other 25 per cent. Those statistics are very illustrative and need no further commentary.

Those are only a few of the real problems facing the United Nations and the international community. It is against that background that we must ask ourselves whether our Organization has the capacity necessary to tackle such problems and challenges. I am afraid that the answer would be, in general "no", with some worthy exceptions. We are sure that this situation is at the heart of the concerns of the Secretary-General and of the Assembly.

The Secretary-General is now proposing a new response through his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1). Here, we wish to express our sincere appreciation and support for the efforts and goals of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Organization. The report proposes a set of actions and measures which, in the opinion of the Secretary-General, are practical and pragmatic. They appear modest if considered separately, but they could have greater impact if taken as a whole.

At the present time, our delegation will not make any observations or an assessment of the actions and measures proposed because of the doubts we still have on their scope, some of their implications, their means of implementation and on the cost versus benefits. We are certain that those doubts will be clarified in the course of the informal consultations following this debate. In that respect, we support the statement of the Group of 77.

Nevertheless, we would like to make a few comments on how we view this reform proposal in general. We believe, perhaps a little empirically and subjectively, that the proposals are somewhat modest, especially when measured against the problems and challenges faced by the Organization in the real world in which we live. We also see that these definitely valuable proposals are designed to improve the internal operation of the Organization. Of course, it is very important, above all else, to put our house in order. As the report states, the reform is a programme to further change and to adapt the internal structure and the mentality of the United Nations to new expectations and challenges.

In this process of new reforms, we would have liked to see more clearly how to strengthen the external operation of the Organization so that it can improve and extend its reach throughout the world. We believe that the Organization has a very important role to play in events on the world stage, along with other actors, States and other international institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Here, we are referring particularly to the process of globalization, which is shaping a new world characterized by the supremacy of the interests of multinational corporations, which have a mercantilist vision of trade relations, investment and scientific and technical knowledge. We know that this process is affecting and changing the behaviour of societies at all levels — even the most remote societies — as well as the behaviour of actors on the international stage, including the United Nations, with all the positive and negative risks and consequences that the process of globalization entails.

But we also believe that the United Nations must assume a leadership role and have a greater presence on the world stage. It must be capable of influencing, impacting and even shaping the process of globalization in order to make it more human and more responsible towards the basic and social needs of millions of human beings. We agree with the observation of the European Union, also cited by the Ambassador of Singapore: "The ultimate aim of our work in the United Nations is to make the world a better place for the poor people of the planet." (*A/57/PV.38*)

In this regard, with due respect, we disagree with the Ambassador of Singapore. It is not through the allocation of the budget of the Organization that we are going to help create the conditions for a better world. We are convinced that it is through compliance with the commitments pledged by the Member States of the Organization that the world will start to change for the better.

In this context, we believe that the Organization should also have an agenda for change towards the world. Allow me to give an example. The Organization has the mandate to follow up the implementation of the goals and achievements of the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. But we believe that mere follow-up is not enough. The Organization, in a practical and pragmatic spirit, can and must also carry out an effort to promote — lobbying, as they say — compliance with those commitments. There should be a visible leadership figure responsible for this work, who can be described as creating awareness at the highest level, as well as at a personal level, among the political leaders of States. The United Nations is in a privileged position because it possesses great moral authority and a strong sense of social justice.

We wish to conclude by reiterating our appreciation and support for the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen our Organization, and we reiterate our commitment to participating in the consultations in a constructive spirit of solidarity.

The President: We have just heard the last speaker in the plenary debate on agenda item 52 on strengthening of the United Nations system.

Before I adjourn the meeting, let me make some concluding remarks. First, I would like to thank all of you who have participated in the debate for your attentive and thoughtful observations. It was a very rich and interesting debate. We have listened to 71 statements, with various views and numerous constructive and well-grounded suggestions.

Despite the diversity of comments, almost all statements have had many points in common. I would like to summarize briefly some of the points that prevailed in many speeches. It seems to me that we have already found a common ground of understanding which could serve us a starting point for the upcoming informal consultations. I have heard strong support, for example, for the following perceptions. There is appreciation of the Secretary-General for coming forward with a comprehensive set of new reform proposals and for his continuing effort in making the United Nations more productive, efficient and effective.

Secondly, there is recognition of the need for a holistic approach towards all agenda items related to United Nations reform — namely, revitalization of the General Assembly and the integrated follow-up on global conferences — so that the changes that are being introduced under various agenda items complement one another and pull together in the same direction.

Thirdly, the United Nations development agenda clearly remains at the centre of the work of the United Nations, and the next programme budget would better reflect the priorities agreed upon at the Millennium Assembly as well as at other United Nations conferences.

Fourthly, the implementation plan to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization's presence in developing countries was generally welcomed.

Lastly — and I am giving only a few examples — general agreement was also expressed with regard to proceeding with reform measures that are within the competence of the Secretary-General. I was particularly pleased to realize, first, that it will not necessarily be difficult to formulate an agreed position among Member States concerning many proposals put forward by the Secretary-General for which authorization by the General Assembly is needed, and secondly, that all delegations that expressed their concerns and reservations with regard to some of the proposed actions did so in a constructive manner. That leads me to believe that we have a constructive process of consultations and negotiations before us.

As I promised at the beginning of this debate, I should now like to advise the Assembly that I have appointed Mr. Abdul Mejid Hussein, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, to assist me in leading the process of informal consultation. Moreover, we will be assisted by the following Facilitators: Mr. Movses Abelian, Permanent Representative of Armenia; Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh; Mr. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga, Permanent Representative of Ecuador; Mr. Denis Dangue Réwaka, Permanent Representative of Gabon; Mr. Mochamad Slamet Hidayat, Chargé d'Affaires of Indonesia; Mr. Stafford O. Neil, Permanent Representative of Jamaica; Mr. Mohamed Bennouna, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco; Mr. Dirk Jan van den Berg, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; Mr. Don MacKay, Permanent Representative of New Zealand; and Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan.

They all kindly agreed to facilitate communication between the presidency and the membership during the process of informal consultations and negotiations on resolutions through what I would call very informal outreach and, beyond any formal structures, they will work towards a kind of expanded transparency. Each delegation can, of course, contact any of the Facilitators I have just mentioned — regardless of region or subregion — and share with him its concerns, ideas and suggestions at any time. I have clearly asked the Facilitators to conduct as many voluntary consultations with Member States as possible. I should like to stress that they will not stand between Members and myself — quite the contrary. They will assist me and the Vice-Presidents in learning about as many of your ideas as possible, and they will enable us to learn more about your suggestions than we could find out relying 24 hours a day on our own human capacity.

I should like to announce that the open-ended informal consultations will begin on Monday afternoon, 4 November, when we shall consider the issues of public information, development and social and economic issues. That will be the first item, and I am referring here to issues under Chapter II (a) and (c), to those under all of Chapter III and to those under Chapter IV (a) and (b). Essentially, we shall deal with proposed actions 1 and 6-18 on Monday. The informal consultations that will follow are scheduled for Wednesday and Friday. I shall announce on Monday the themes to be discussed Wednesday and Friday, but be assured that we shall cover all of the themes raised during the plenary debate and in Members' submitted questions.

I have listened to Members' statements very carefully. On the basis of those statements — and also, of course, on the interventions to be made during the forthcoming informal consultations — I plan to submit the first draft of the resolution, which will reflect the views of Members, shortly after mid-November. I should like to reiterate that the process will be open and transparent, and that the informal consultations will continue for as long as necessary. I should also like to assure Members that my own door will remain open to everyone during the entire process. I am genuinely looking forward to your close cooperation, which I believe will yield a good resolution.

Let me repeat my conviction — expressed at the beginning of this debate — that we should be able to agree on this resolution before Christmas, so that next year we can concentrate on some of the more detailed work that will need to be carried out by experts in their respective Committees.

Before I adjourn the meeting, I should like to make an announcement regarding an addition to the programme of work for the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on Monday morning, 4 November. The Assembly will consider, as the third item, sub-item (a) of agenda item 41, "Final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", in order to take action on a draft resolution contained in document A/57/468/Add.1, recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Final Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 52.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.